OTHER WORLDS

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JUNE, 1953

35¢

The Thinking Cap

Robert Bloch

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The People Who Make OTHER WORLDS

No. 14

ROBERT BLOCH

THE more I read autobiographical notes, the worse I feel. I just can't seem to compete with the backgrounds of other writers.

I've never been a busboy, a used-car salesman, or an inmate of an opium den. I've never even been a newspaper man, because I'd hate to stand on those corners in cold weather. I've not lived in Greenwich Village, nor taken a hitch as a sailor on a tramp steamer, nor ridden a freight train, nor a broomstick. I have no distinguished scientific or technical background. I know nothing about physics, and haven't taken one for years.

I've spent 36 years on this earth, and while it's a nice place to visit, I wouldn't want to live here. For almost 19 of those years I've written fantasy fiction — including political campaigns and advertising. I've put out the usual novel, book of short stories, radio program, and excuses for not writing more. I enjoy writing, and writers: reading, and readers. People have been very kind to me through the years (how did *that* sentence get in here?) and I'm duly grateful for the privilege of attempting to entertain them. I've no ambition other than to continue.

In conclusion I wish to state that I am not, and never have been a member of the human race, and any resemblance to persons living or dead is difficult to detect by looking at my photograph.

Robert Bloch

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OTHER WORLDS

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....Editorial...

THE magazine you are reading is called a science-fiction magazine. Back in 1926, after the success of some experimental stories in magazines devoted to scientific subjects, the idea of publishing magazines containing fiction which was based on science and particularly on the future implications of already existing scientific discoveries became an actuality — and a new type of entertainment was born. It was soon discovered that not only did these logical, realistically-imaginative stories entertain, but they actually stimulated an interest in science and in the future, and served to enlarge the reader's knowledge of science and its relation to theory. Today we have come to a new development in the science-fiction field; its maturity, its graduation into entertainment big-business.

You readers of OTHER WORLDS are of several types: One type is that known as the science-fiction fan; i.e. you have read it for some time, and get more than mere entertainment out of it, but it is actually a hobby with you. You collect science-fiction magazines, you go to science-fiction's annual convention (by the thousands!), and you even have local and national clubs and publish little club papers of your own. The other type is the average magazine reader. You read science-fiction and you read detectives, you read general magazines and you read news magazines; you aren't specializing in anything. But you are a numerous clan, far more numerous than science-fiction fans. Nobody, up to now, realized how numerous you were. You grew, like Topsy. You read science-fiction in your newspapers and fact magazines (for what you see there today is exactly the realization of yesterday's science-fiction—fiction grown to fact, as predicted). You came to accept it without question. You needed no special interests. It was "the world today" as the world was going. You were part of it. But it-conditioned you to a like acceptance of the current science-fiction, which still tells us, not of today, but of tomorrow. Insiduously you've come to accept Buck Rogers as a real, and not a fictional character, in an easily understandable way. But actually, you are suddenly very important! You are big-business' new "target for today."

When you visit the stands you are confronted with dozens of magazines in the science-fiction field. They are beginning to outnumber all other types of magazines, even westerns and adventures. And where once a few magazines enjoyed a steady sale to a steady clientele, there are now many fighting tooth and nail for your

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business. There is a highly developed competition.

Many of these magazines are considered "heresy" to the science-fiction fan. Their editors and publishers are not acquainted with the history of science-fiction; they have no previous experience in just what science-fiction is; they have no basis on which to select and present science-fiction material to you. Consequently, you are getting an amazing array of material which lifts your eyebrows in astonishment. "Is this science-fiction?" you ask.

Well, the answer is, of course, yes. Even if you are a "fan" and you bridle at stories and articles which offend your sense of "what is and what is not," you must accept the fact that all these new things are now a part of what has lost its real meaning, science-fiction. No longer is it a particular kind of story, highly defined in category, but it is a "field." It is a new type of *magazine market*, with a new, large, undecided readership. It can go almost anywhere, its confines dictated solely by imagination, business ingenuity and high-pressure salesmanship.

No longer will the specialist dictate what science-fiction will be. The "average" reader will be the great mass of readers. He will read indiscriminately depending on the sales appeal of the moment. He will be "sold" from issue to issue. He will not know the meaning of what is termed "loyalty." One month he will read one magazine, the next he will be drawn to another. He may not even remember the titles of the magazines he reads. He will say, when asked: "I read science-fiction magazines."

What does this mean to the magazine you are reading now? (The title is OTHER WORLDS.) Well, it means, in one way, an expanding market which we can share in, simply by appealing to the readership of that market. It means, in another way, a menacing threat to existence. It means we must now compete, fight for our readers, rather than remain in a complacent status of dependable circulation.

One of OTHER WORLDS' strongest points has always been its friendliness, its personal contact with its readers, many thousands of whom actually consider themselves personal friends of the editor. This strong point becomes, in a way, a weakness in dealing with you new readers. You aren't used to such familiarity. You may even resent it . . . until you become acquainted—if we can hang on to you long enough to learn your first name. Thus, by necessity, you older readers, our steady followers, will be involved in the process of our girding ourselves for battle with weapons that may not always seem appropriate. You will be forced to evolve also, broaden your own concept of science-fiction. Perhaps unconsciously you are already being broadened, being converted into less of a "fan" and more of just a "reader" of science-fiction. Maybe you've read quite a few issues of the new

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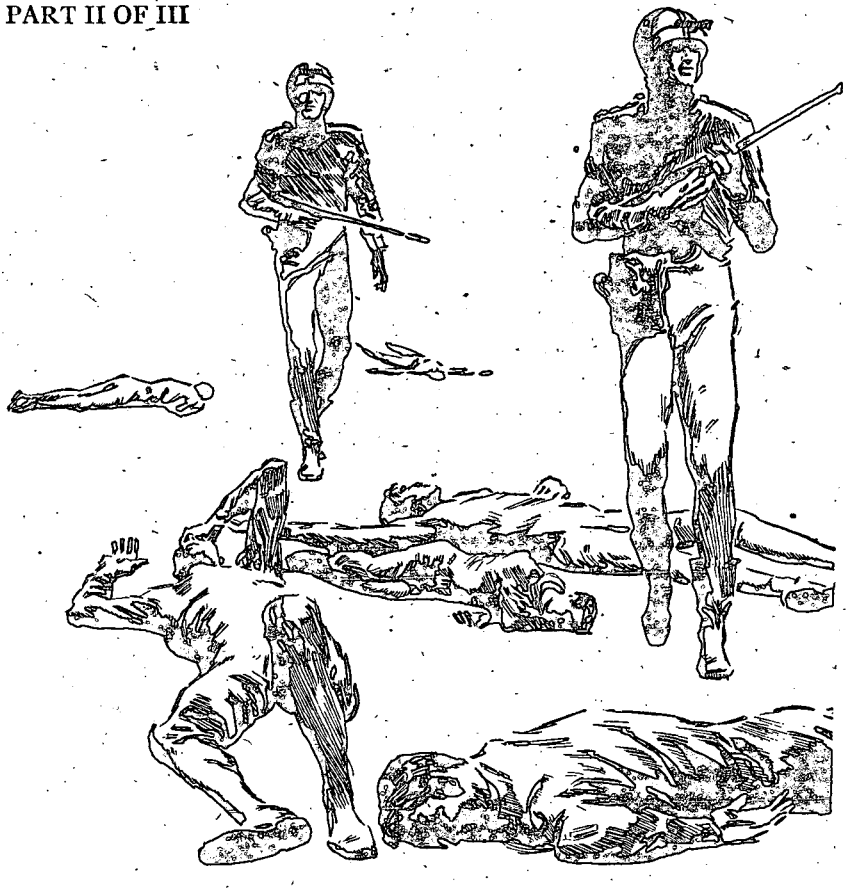
PART II OF III



POWER METAL

By S. J. Byrne

Imprisoned and seemingly defeated, Larry Buchanan makes a valiant effort to strike back at Earth, only to find his path blocked by Lorena Forral and, indirectly, his personal nemesis—Vincent the Invincible.

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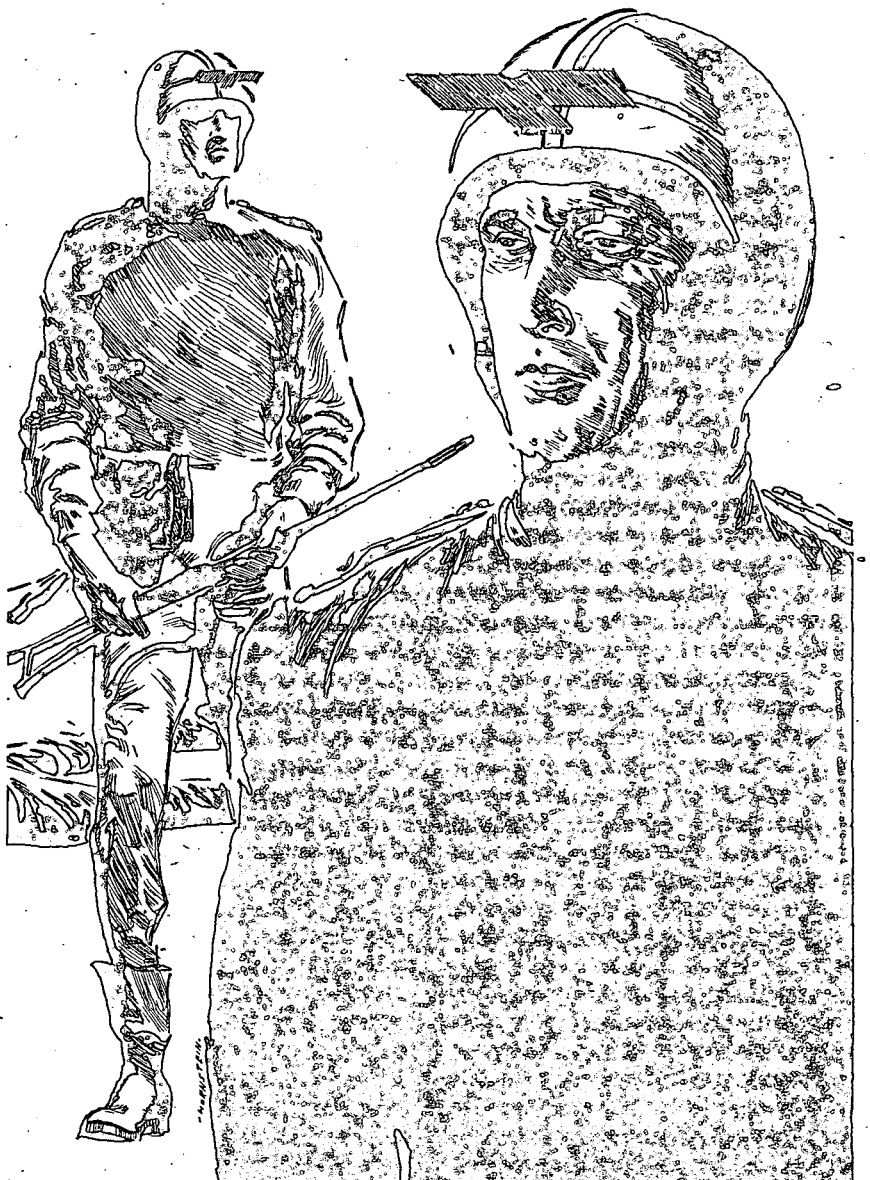

Illustrated by Charles Hornstein

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SYNOPSIS OF PART I

LARRY BUCHANAN is descended from a long line of pioneers who helped settle and develop a colony of Earth people on the large planet, Teran, belonging to the planetary system of Alpha Centauri. Inasmuch as Teran has half again the mass of Earth, the resultant descendants have made an adjustment to environment resulting in greater physical strength and a much greater stature than their contemporaries inhabiting the governing system of Sol. Moreover, a careful system of selective emigration to the colony of Teran has resulted in a superior race of men, in terms of intellect, training and personality, although they are in the minority in the ratio of twelve million Teranians to six billion Earthman inhabitants of the Sol System.

Buchanan grows up as a spaceman in the Alpha System, never knowing the solar system of his ancestors' origin but always dreaming of taking the "big hop" to Sol, a six year journey, one way. His life long acquaintance, Vincent Cardwell, becomes more than a spaceman. In fact, he becomes just about anything he sets his mind to. Subjectively, Buchanan resents Cardwell's more powerful and decisive personality and calls him, in his own secret mental world, "Vincent the Invincible." When Cardwell rises to become controlling stockholder in the Carlona Corporation, an interstellar shipping concern, this deepens the subjective schism between the two, but when Buchanan returns from a one year work assignment on the four moons of Teran to find that his fiancee, Anne, has married Cardwell, his bitterness is complete, although for Anne's happiness he attempts to maintain good appearances on the surface.

The Central Government on Earth has become completely dictatorial, especially in regard to Teran. There have been many abuses of the colony such as unfair tariff regulations, restrictions on trade and original, basic research and free enterprise, even to the point of actual Charter violations. The dream of Teranian independence is born, of which Buchanan is not particularly cognizant, at first; but Cardwell, in his own inimitable way, secretly plans to apply his Midas touch even to the brave dream of his people. The single interstellar ship belonging to his corporation, the I.S.S. Carlona, is to play one of the most strategic roles in the Teranian Revolution. Cardwell is her skipper and Buchanan is the Assistant Engineer.

A recent immigrant to Teran, Harold Lydecker, becomes the leader of the Party for Independence. On the night prior to the departure of the I.S.S. Carlona for Sol, Cardwell and Buchanan are summoned to a secret meeting headed by Lydecker, a diminutive "Earthworm" but a towering dynamo of leadership. The reason for the emergency meeting is that the local Colonial Governor, John Pomeroy, has requested passage to Earth on the Carlona, which circumstance will hinder the subversive activities of the crew unless they are adequately

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briefed beforehand.

At this meeting, Buchanan is surprised to note that the original crew of the Carlona has been changed, except for himself and Cardwell, and that a passenger has been added, who is present to hear Lydecker. This passenger is a famous young Teranian specialist in nuclear physics, William Haufek. Some of the new crew members are also prominent scientists. This sudden change becomes clarified when Lydecker discusses the main bone of contention between Teran and Central Government.

This is the subject of cosmium, the metal of power.

Cosmium was never discovered in solar spectrographs because it is not produced in suns, but rather in the cooling cores of planets and larger satellites, such as the Earth's moon. In fact, it was first discovered on the Moon, in the course of exploratory borings into its core. Of an atomic weight, 100, cosmium becomes unstable when removed from its heavy gravitational field and exposed to cosmic ray bombardment. Several lunar stations were blasted out of existence before scientists knew what they had and learned how to shield it from cosmic rays. Its power yield was far superior in terms of nuclear energy to anything previously discovered, and gave promise of ushering in an entirely new age of progress and expansion. To those who controlled it exclusively, it was power in many a sense of the word. It was empire.

The Moon, Mars and the twilight zone of Mercury became sources of cosmium in the Sol System, because larger planets such as Venus and Earth were too massive and hot to work—as was Teran. But there were satellites and smaller planets in the Alpha System which could be developed as even greater sources of cosmium than in the Sol System. John Pomeroy, the Governor of Teran, however, had informed the Teranians that cosmium would be developed in the Alpha System only under the strictest supervision of Central Government, and that all production would be transported to the Sol System for safe keeping.

Recognizing the glaring danger of falling into mere puppetism under such a plan, the millions of members of the Teranian Party for Independence planned to revolt. On the basis of certain carefully laid secret plans, I.S.S. Carlona and its specialized crew hope to steal all the Sol System's stored cosmium from Martanium and return with it to Teran, at which time they will make their formal Declaration of Independence.

After the meeting, Cardwell takes Buchanan with him to his home on Lake Catherine, far inland from the Teranian capital city, Astra. Here Cardwell's wife and Buchanan's former fiancee, Anne Cardwell, is waiting up for them. It is the eve of departure for both men. They are to be gone a minimum of twelve years. Cardwell will be leaving his wife and small twin boys for such a long period that it is tantamount to breaking up a home, and Buchanan suspects that there is more than altruism behind

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Cardwell's determination to pilot the strategic ship to Sol. He fears that "Vincent the Invincible" is out to make another Midas touch, for his own personal gain. The situation becomes tense because there is frustration and incompatibility between Anne and Cardwell, and because Buchanan and Anne are still in love with each other and unable to express it.

Cardwell pretends illness and retires. Buchanan takes Anne for a canoe ride on the lake and they go to an island that used to be their own private rendezvous. Here the two admit their love for each other and Buchanan promises to return from the twelve year voyage and make everything right between them. Cardwell sees them return, hours later, but says nothing.

The next morning on the way back to the space port, the two men have such an argument over Anne that they make a pact between them: Only one of them is going to return from the long voyage . . .

In the course of the six year journey to Sol, both the revolutionary plans and the strife between Buchanan and Cardwell develop. A secret space yacht, remote controlled, is brought in from an Alpha System asteroid and stowed in the last barge of the train that the Carlona is towing. This is the specially equipped vessel, Surprise, containing a key Teranian weapon designed to surprise the colony of Martanium on Mars.

Cardwell makes an attempt to kill Buchanan, but fails, and it becomes Buchanan's turn to strike a blow—so that only one of them will return. As the months pass and the velocity of the Carlona increases steadily, Buchanan watches for a chance. In the meantime they are all aware of the fact that another interstellar ship, the Roosevelt, has arrived on Teran with a new governor named Wainman and new troops to bolster the garrison. Evidently Central Government is becoming wary.

Buchanan has acquired a new space buddy, Peter Puckett, swobbie and barge man. Owing to the system of hibersleep scheduling which keeps most of the men in a state bordering on suspended animation seven days at a time, to conserve oxygen and supplies and make time go faster, there are only three men on deck at any given time. On one of the occasions when Puckett and Buchanan are on deck together, they have a long talk with William Haufek and lay the foundations for an enduring close friendship between the three of them. Haufek expresses the same doubts which haunt Buchanan—that there is a plot within a plot; that Lydecker and the crew of the Carlona are being used as pawns in some greater, Master Plan, of which Cardwell may or may not be cognizant.

In discussing the limitations of star ship velocity under the speed of light, owing to the increase of mass to Infinity at light's velocity, Haufek divulges his secret theory concerning the mass inversion drive, which might change the ship and its occupants to contraterrene, but which could jump

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across whole galaxies. To experiment on such a drive, Haufek needs cosmium. The three make a pact to keep this theory to themselves.

Then Buchanan is presented with a challenge from Cardwell to have a duel in space. A galactite has been sighted, traveling along their own course, and it is apparently possible to haul it in on their space raft. Buchanan and Cardwell approach the galactite; when Buchanan throws a magnablock and line out to the galactite, he is surprised to witness a violent explosion. The "galactite" is contra-terrene, indicating that Haufek's mass inversion equations may be correct. But this is not all. A hole is blown in the side of the twenty foot chunk of extra-galactic matter, and he sees tiny decks, bulkheads and miniature skeletons which drift out into the void—a sign of intelligent life in another universe!

But all this is not observed by Cardwell, as he is too busy pushing Buchanan off the raft. They are struck by a cloud of cosmic dust which, at their speed, has hurricane force. Instead of Buchanan, it is Cardwell who is hurled off the raft, and is drifting rapidly out of range. A psychological duel ensues, in which Buchanan appears to weaken by calling out to the other. Cardwell accuses him of weakness. "You are incapable of the clean, clear stroke of decision. You can't let me die, can you? Anne or No Anne . . ."

Buchanan rescues Cardwell in the secret space yacht, and the cat is out of the bag as far as Governor Pomeroy is concerned. This fact, coupled with an interstellar message from Earth to Teran, accusing Lydecker of conspiracy, is too much for Communications Officer Raymond Hopper, who confesses all to Pomeroy, whom they imprison for the time being. Cardwell expresses the hope that they may be able to indoctrinate Pomeroy before the voyage ends. The other men are dubious about this. They fear that the whole Sol System will be crawling with Patrol ships awaiting their arrival, if the information concerning the Carlona is forced from him.

Within one year of reaching Sol, they intercept a message from the new Teranian governor, Wainman, in reply to Earth's accusation of Lydecker. It is such a smooth cover up of their own enterprise that Haufek, Buchanan and Puckett again become suspicious of the existence of a Master Plan. However, arrangements are made to plant the little ship, Surprise, on an asteroid, Balder, in the belt beyond Mars, to wait there until they need it on Mars.

Crisis develops when they are challenged by a Solar Patrol cruiser and told to rendezvous with it in twenty-one days on their present course. Cardwell immediately alters plans. He wants Haufek and Puckett to man the Surprise and wait on Balder for them. Then he advises the Patrol Ship that they will comply, but that the conspirators were apprehended and killed, referring to Puckett and Haufek. The whole thing again is so smooth that Buchanan comes out into

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the open with his accusations. A physical struggle between him and Cardwell ensues, with Buchanan winning. He demands to know who is behind everything.

Governor Pomeroy, who has long since been released from the brig as having been indoctrinated to support their side, appears on the scene with a machine pistol.

"I am," he says. He stands there covering Buchanan and informs him that he will also be one of the crew of the Surprise and do exactly what he is told. Buchanan is then surprised by Cardwell and held down.

Cardwell states that Pomeroy is planning to conquer both solar systems, the inference being that Cardwell will be his right hand man.

Buchanan lunges upward to grab Cardwell's throat, but the butt of Pomeroy's gun descends on his skull.

Now go on with the story.

CHAPTER 10

WHEN Olmstead, Makowski, Winzer and Jayne came out of hibersleep, they discovered that Buchanan, Haufek and Puckett had vanished, but that Cardwell and the Governor were very much with them. Cardwell brought them together in the combination recreation and conference room to explain. Governor Pomeroy had deliberately assumed the role of accomplice by taking a seat beside Cardwell. As the towering Teranians filed in to take their places at the table they glared at him in suspicious resentment while he gave them the old "Emperor" treatment, staring at each one with a penetrating intentness, as though they had come before the final tribunal that was to decide their fate.

"Plans have been changed owing to new developments," said Cardwell, cutting through the tension.

"What's this about Buchanan, Haufek and Puckett?" interrupted Winzer, as he sat down. "Where are they?"

"They have taken the *Surprise* to *Balder*," he answered. As the other four looked at each other in tense, questioning astonishment, he went on more rapidly. "Don't worry about the survival factors. They have a barge with them—plenty of oxygen, food, water and equipment. They can hold out for months, until we call them. You see—in view of this message we have little hope now of smuggling in the remo gear necessary for handling the *Surprise* remotely. It has to be manned."

He passed around the message from the Solar Patrol ship and watched their eyebrows go up.

"My God!" ejaculated Makowski. "That class of ship is heavy calibre and probably has cosmium power!"

Cardwell smiled confidently and passed around the second message. "By making our change of plans in a hurry and getting three men off the ship we were able to make up this answer . . ."

" 'Killed resisting arrest . . . as witnessed Governor Pomeroy,' " quoted Olmstead, holding the codatape copy in his hands. His eyes narrowed as he

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watched both Cardwell and Pomeroy. "That burns one bridge behind Buchanan, Haufek and Puckett. They are now definitely branded as conspirators."

"Don't forget," put in Pomeroy. "To Central Government, they are 'dead,' dumped into space. Nobody will look for them or suspect the presence of the *Surprise* in the asteroid belt, so the whole enterprise is still adequately camouflaged."

"Is it?" queried Dr. Jayne. "What about you? How do we know you are with us?"

"Yes," put in Makowski, sullenly. "It would be the simplest matter in the world for you to step over into their 'protective custody' when they board us and frame us all. In fact, maybe that's what you are waiting for."

"Just a minute—" Cardwell started to interrupt.

"Let me handle this," insisted Pomeroy. "Makowski has a damned good question, and I'll answer it. First of all, it would be impractical for me to merely give you my word—that I believe in Teranian independence and will do all I can to help, because I want to become a Teranian, myself. Instead, we'll give you the weapons. You can disarm me before the Patrol Ship comes alongside. If I turn you in, your game is up, so you can take me with you—shoot me down on the spot. But I won't. We'll all be questioned together, and my defense of the lot of you will place us all in a position to continue to Mars and progress with your original plans."

"What kind of stims do you smoke?" bellowed Olmstead. "In the first place, we'd be disarmed before such questioning started, and in the second place we can't hope to keep you under our noses very long after we contact the Patrol ship."

Pomeroy made a slight gesture with his hands. "Then who has a better suggestion?"

"I have!" said Makowski, his face darkening. "I think we should dump you through a lock!"

Cardwell grinned. "And have *that* to explain to Central Government? If we got rid of the Governor here, we *would* be burning the bridges behind us!"

"Look!" said Winzer. "Practically speaking, this is a lousy mess. There's no way of rationalizing ourselves out of the fact that we'll just have to take our chances. It's too late to run for it now. We've got to go ahead. With Cardwell, we are five against Pomeroy if he makes a slip. Any one of us could still wring his neck. If none of us survives, there are still Buchanan, Puckett and Haufek. They have the *Surprise* and the *weapon*. And there is Lydecker back on Teran, backed by millions of Party members. Sooner or later, Pomeroy would get the axe if he betrayed us. You know that, don't you, Pomeroy?"

Governor Pomeroy smiled in grim appreciation as he stared at all four. "That's a fair proposition."

ALTHOUGH Winzer and Jayne suggested it, no attempt was

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made to communicate with the *Surprise,* nor did the space yacht try to contact the *Carlona*—for obvious reasons. Central Government Patrol Ship No. 10 would have been only too happy to intercept such messages and learn of the existence of the deadly little ship. It was patently certain now that the social destiny of the whole Alpha System depended on the *Surprise* and her little crew of three. Alone and necessarily cut off from all communication, she towed her supply barge through the void, groping her way among the swift planetoids of the *Belt,* tracking down the orbit of a ten mile lump of matter known as *Balder.*

At the expiration of the prescribed twenty-one days, the Patrol Ship appeared astern of them, swiftly matching its velocity with theirs. The visiscope was constantly in use now, as none but the Governor had ever visited the Sol System before, and the other men were busy examining it visually. They were a month out from Mars now. With reference to their point of origin, the system lay "above" them. Mars and Jupiter both showed a disc, without magnification, and in the great gap between the two they could make out a few moving specks which marked the *Belt.* Earth was a super magnitude, blue-green star. Each conspirator magnified this body and studied it intently. Each surveyed this centuries-old headquarters of the dictatorial Central Government with private emotions of his own. And each surveyed the approaching Patrol Ship with a more adequately expressed common denominator of emotion.

It was smaller than the *Carlona* by some two hundred feet and was devoid of a "ring deck," the assumption of the part of its designers being that servicemen did not require the luxury of centrifugal "gravity" but could content themselves with deceleration or acceleration. Born in the shipyards of the airless Moon and designed to spend most of its life in empty space, it was no more streamlined than any other interplanetary or interstellar vessel, but it was roughly cigar shaped. Its outer hull was studded with robotories, magnabeam and power beam projectors and heavy calibre torpedo racks. As it moved in close astern they could see the torpedoes—swift, automatic missiles of death, capable of homing in on any target within sixty degrees of their original trajectories.

The Patrol captain hailed them peremptorily over the radio and announced that a commuter was coming over. They were given the order to stand by for the boarding party.

If Cardwell, who received the phone message, noted something hauntingly familiar in the voice of the Patrol captain, he gave no outward sign of it, but he headed the reception committee at the base of the "spoke" as the Governor and the *Carlona's* diminished crew waited for their "Earthworm" captors.

In spite of his mounting suspicion, he staggered visibly when he say Larry Buchanan climb down the netting and onto the "ring deck," followed by Peter Puckett. Both of them

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were armed with machine pistols, and they were grinning in triumph.

"All right," said Buchanan. "Vince, you and Pomeroy over against the wall. Pete, frisk those two!"

"Larry!" exclaimed Winzer. "How in the hell—"

"Never mind, boys," Buchanan interrupted. "You four are still in our camp, so relax. It's all quite simple. We parked the barge on *Balder*, refueled, and doubled back. We used our weapon against the Patrol ship, and as they weren't expecting it we took them. The whole crew is temporarily paralyzed. Now we can haul our loot back to Teran with a first line interstellar fighting ship powered by cosmium."

"Well, hooray for our side," commented Jayne, with a congratulatory smile.

"Just a minute!" said Cardwell. "You wouldn't have had time to go to *Balder* and take that Patrol ship before the rendezvous."

"You mean Earthworms couldn't have done it," retorted Buchanan. "Teranians, it seems, can stand quite a few more G's of acceleration and deceleration than orthodox space medicos are willing to admit. We're here, aren't we?"

"Where is Haufek?" asked Olmstead.

"In sick bay on board the Patrol ship. We were a little rough on him, I'm afraid. After all, fifteen G's—"

"And the *Surprise?*" queried Makowski.

"Trailing dutifully behind us, just out of visiscope range."

"But what's this with Cardwell and the Governor?" asked Winzer. "After all, Cardwell was—"

"*Was* is the word!" fumed Buchanan. "He *was* captain. This isn't mutiny—it's war. All of us, including Lydecker, were just so many stooges. Believe it or not, John Pomeroy here is the real Master Mind. You told me yourself, didn't you, Governor?"

"This may sound like a tired cliché," replied Pomeroy, "but I have to inform you that you'll never get away with it. You don't know how many years I've been working on my plans, or how many powerful people are involved. It's all too big for your comprehension, so I'd suggest you put in with me and Cardwell here and go along for your own good. You're clever men and you'll be recognized as such. I can use all of you."

"Talk about clichés!" exclaimed Buchanan. His face reddened and he glared at Pomeroy. "Listen, you tin-plated little—"

"Larry, wait a minute!" yelled Makowski. "I want to get this straight. If Lydecker's plan is just a front for a bigger one, what *is* the Master Plan? What's Pomeroy's cut and where does Cardwell come in?"

Puckett, still training his gun on his two prisoners, looked over at Buchanan and smiled sweetly. "Why don't you tell them, Larry?" he said. "Nothing like boosting one's faith in one's fellow men, you know."

Buchanan told them all he knew, while Cardwell quietly shared Governor Pomeroy's visible amusement.

"As I see it," he concluded, "a

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strategic part of the Master Plan was to let the *Surprisé* do its dirty work, and its crew was to be eliminated, along with the rest of you working at Martanium. The stolen cosmium was to be hidden away—maybe on *Balder*—and used as a bargaining point by Pomeroy and Cardwell when they pulled their prepared political *coup d'etat* in the Sol System Government."

"But what about Lydecker and the Party?" asked Winzer. "What about Teranian Independence?"

Buchanan and Puckett both smiled grimly. "Lydecker and the Party are pawns, whatever their sincerity may be. It was all a catalytic agent for achieving other results which were to benefit Mr. Master Mind and his henchmen. After all, that's the only way they could have gotten hold of the Teranian secret weapon and found the excuse to get in to Martanium." He turned to stare at Cardwell and Pomeroy. "These two distinguished gentlemen you see before you were willing to achieve personal power over both solar systems at the expense of the courage and idealism of a race of fellow human beings—namely, our own."

"Oh good God!" shouted Cardwell. "You're breaking my heart!"

"Shut up!" barked Puckett. "Or I'll break your neck!"

"It might seem a little picturesque," remarked Makowski, "but I think a 'plank walk' would be in order . . . with suits and a short supply of air . . ."

Pomeroy's slight smile faded slowly and his eyes became wary as he watched the others mull this over. Cardwell watched Buchanan, and their eyes met. And Buchanan heard again those filtered words of Cardwell's, inside his space suit, out there on the raft years and light years past: "You are incapable of the clean, clear stroke of decision. You can't let me die, can you? Anne or no Anne."

The old personal challenge was there again.

Buchanan still glared at Cardwell as he spoke. "Why waste good spacesuits?" he said, slowly. "I think I have a better idea."

When he had outlined his plan to the others he was so intent upon watching Cardwell's face that he failed to note a glitter of triumph in Pomeroy's eyes.

It required several hours to transfer the crew of the Patrol ship to the *Carlona*. Their paralysis would wear off in time for them to bring the merchant ship safely in to Earth. When they acquired the use of their faculties again, they were going to discover a note displayed prominently on the Bridge and addressed to the Patrol Captain. It read:

Captain, Patrol Ship No. 10—

We are trading you the *I.S.S. Carlona* for your ship, which is necessary to our escape back to Teran. If you are interested in laying your hands on the leaders of the whole conspiracy you might look in the brig. Don't take our word for it. Sub-monitor them and find out for yourself!

Buchanan saw to it that the two

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prisoners had enough food and water to last them. He was the last to check up on them before all hands left the *Carlona.*

He and Cardwell again exchanged stares, and Buchanan finally sneered, "Vincent the Invincible!"

For answer, Cardwell only chuckled. But as an afterthought he added, "You're just a big overgrown kid, Larry."

And Larry, raging within, fled from the temptation to commit murder....

CHAPTER 11

WHEN they pulled CGPS 10 out of the *Carlona's* course and started back toward *Balder,* guiding the *Surprise* into their wake, they took with them one officer of the government ship. Dr. Jayne gave him an injection which acted upon the nervous system and minimized the effects of the induced paralysis, and in a few hours they were able to talk to him. He was approximately thirty-two years old, a dark-haired, dark eyed perfect specimen of healthy, strong, indoctrinated "Earthworm."

Peter Puckett had discovered a well stocked galley and had busied himself preparing such a meal as they had not tasted in six long years. It was at mess that the captured officer was questioned. He came among them like a boy among giants. Evidently he had never really seen a Teranian at close range. But in spite of his amazement he did not forget the responsibilities of his rank as CPO of a Solar Patrol ship. Nor would the mental regimentation of an Interplanetary State permit him to think for himself.

"You men must be insane," he told them, without accepting the seat Winzer offered him at the mess table. "You are revolutionists, conspirators, mutineers, pirates! You have resisted arrest, endangered the lives of Solar Government police officers and enlisted men and stolen a first line Patrol ship! Yet here you are enjoying a banquet in the home territory of your enemy!"

"You know," said Puckett, cutting a juicy steak, "in a way, we're like the freebooters of the old days back on Earth when the native races of the American continents were getting raped by Europe. Remember the old stories about the West Indies and the pirate hideouts? Well, the *Belt* is like that—hundreds of flying islands in the sky. And here we go with our prize, back to our little den to plan a real raid! Hey Chief, is there any rum on board? We might as well make this picture complete for you."

"Shut up, Pete!" grinned Buchanan, also enjoying his steak.

The CPO's eyes widened. "Do you mean to say you are contemplating a raid? Where?"

"Sit down," said Buchanan, "and we'll tell you about it."

When the CPO refused, Olmstead got up and pushed him into a seat. Although by Earth standards he might have been good material for a weight lifting team he was no match for these seven foot Teranians. After

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experiencing a sample of Olmstead's seemingly titanic strength, he did not try to resist. He merely sat there and stared at Buchanan, waiting.

"We are not only contemplating a raid, but we've got to do it in a hurry, and you're going to help us," said Buchanan, pointing a fork at him. "As a Patrol officer, you should be familiar with some of the details concerning the layout at Martanium."

Under Makowski's guidance, the ship changed course slightly at that moment, and more acceleration was applied. The forward sections, inside the hull, swung slightly in their cradles to align themselves with the new center of "gravity," and the CPO almost fell out of his chair. It was appropriately timed to match the expression on his face.

"Martanium!" he exclaimed.

"Where else?" said Buchanan. "It's the cosmium center, isn't it?"

The CPO looked at Buchanan, then at all the others present, and in each grinning face he found confirmation. "You mean—you—"

"Yes, we mean exactly that," interrupted Buchanan. "We're here for one purpose only—to pick up the total cosmium stores at Martanium and take them back to Teran."

The CPO sprang to his feet, furious. "You'll never get away with it! Do you think that one Patrol ship like this can take an armed base like Martanium?"

"You seem to forget," replied Buchanan, sampling some fresh frozen vegetables, "that *something* we had took your ship. That same *something* can take Martanium."

"You still can't get away with it!" exclaimed the CPO. "Why the whole Solar Fleet is maneuvering off of Earth's moon—" He stopped suddenly, eyes going wide, looking at them fearfully.

Knives and forks lowered. During the ensuing heavy silence, many a glance was exchanged. Finally, all those glances centered speculatively on the CPO. And he sat down, weakly.

Each man present knew that the largest government shipyards and refueling stations in the Solar System, outside of Earth, itself, were on the Moon. If the Solar Fleet was engaged in maneuvers in that area, it was temporarily based there.

And in everyone's mind, including the CPO's, rang two historical words: *Pearl Harbor!*

Haufek, who had recovered from the beating he had taken on board the *Surprise*, had the gleam of a bugle boy in his eyes. "Pete," he said, "did you see any wine on board? Perhaps we should drink a toast . . . to Teranian Independence!"

The CPO seemed to shrink within himself. He was unable to eat the food put before him. There was only one hope he could cling to. One piece of secret knowledge was his, and since there were no sub-monitoring devices on board they would never get it from him—until it was too late . . .

Dr. Jayne had been studying the CPO. "Tell me," he said to him. "Are you actually patriotic, under tyranny? Are you moved by sentiment in

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contemplating the danger in which you have placed the Solar Fleet? That is, I assume you realize that one well placed cosmium bomb, which we can no doubt find at Martanium—"

The CPO yelled through his teeth. "You are assassins!"

Dr. Jayne raised his brows in mild surprise. "We are colonists seeking independence," he corrected. "There is something that can be taken from a man which is more important than life, itself, and thus it involves a greater crime. That is self-determination, the right to think independently and originally, which is a process out of which all true civilization has evolved. But Central Government can't see it that way. When they are convinced we are seeking independence, that Solar Fleet you're so much concerned about will be sent against us—and hundreds of thousands of Teranians will die, not to mention an even greater number of harmless Alphids. Whenever human freedoms are endangered, war is the result. And this, my friend, is war. . . ."

In listening to Dr. Jayne, Buchanan suddenly knew why he had finally identified himself wholeheartedly with the original Lydecker Plan.

SUBSEQUENTLY, they attributed the CPO's new docility to Dr. Jayne's speech. He told them what he knew about Martanium, and much of what he told them coincided with some details which were already in Haufek's possession.

Haufek, Puckett, Winzer and Buchanan volunteered to man the *Surprise*. The Patrol ship was to continue to *Balder* and wait for them there. After an intensive period of preparations and careful planning, the four man crew left CGPS 10 and boarded the history making little space yacht.

Again, traveling under forced acceleration and deceleration, but this time sparing Haufek the terrific load he had been subjected to the first time, they came within detector range of Mars within seven days. But detector range was also the range of their own weapon. Whoever might have detected them near Martanium did not have a chance to contact Solar Patrol.

The Teranian paralysis beam was in effect a carrier beam. It carried UHF waves whose upper harmonics were effective in relation to oxygen—oxygen under those conditions of pressure and temperature which were necessarily maintained wherever men breathed. Ultra-sonic vibrations in the atmosphere were the result. These were capable of paralyzing the human nervous system.

Long before their arrival at Martanium, they knew that the whole colony was incapacitated. Moreover, any ships approaching to investigate would get into trouble, because their crews would become paralyzed. There was a protection against the paralysis consisting of a certain type of interference generator, but only a few Teranians knew about that.

Including Vincent Cardwell.

The four men were incapable of resisting a natural curiosity in relation to this famous planet which none of

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them had ever seen before. Although from their position it appeared to be in a one-quarter phase, they were able to see why it had always been called the "red" planet. On close approach it was the most colorful of all planets in both solar systems. The red of oxidized minerals dominated the pastel greens of hardy vegetation. Thin clouds drifted over the equatorial areas, and in the south polar region they caught the distant glint of shallow lakes produced by the melting snow cap there.

There were other, more significant reflections, closer in toward the equator. Visiscope magnification brought them close-up views of other Martian colonies. Dome construction had been abandoned early in the history of interplanetary colonization. Instead, ditches were dug with cabin-sealed equipment, and polarizite strips were laid across the top and sealed together. Nuclear energy heated the ground on either side, making the colonist independent of the sun for mere warmth, and since there were no projecting domes, no resistance was offered to sandstorms. From a "beachhead" ditch, whole canyons were developed and covered. The great polarizite strips at Tharsis made a design on the planet's surface that looked like a maze of giant airstrips. As they descended laterally over the night side of Mars, they discerned the lights of Xanthe, Cydonia, and far to the north—Hellas, the Solar Patrol base. Phobos and Deimos both rose as they observed, swinging toward them like pursuing dreadnaughts, and they knew the stations there, at least, would be picking up signs of their presence. But all this had been foreseen long ago in the planning stages on Teran. There was still time to act.

And now below them in the dark plains of Elysium they made out the waiting lights of strategic Martanium—the end goal of a long, long journey.

AS expected, there was no resistance offered. Inasmuch as the Teranian weapon was the only one of its kind in existence, it was a complete surprise and no defense was possible. Those Teranians on Earth who had been broken down by sub-monitoring had had no knowledge of the paralysis beam, and so the crew of the *Surprise* found that this phase of the Plan was still airtight.

They landed boldly at the locks, manipulated the outer controls, applied docking hooks and had the *Surprise* pulled in to where it would be handy for loading. The main "channel" of Martanium was four hundred feet wide, fifty feet deep, and five miles long, connecting with lateral channels which led either to processing plants and laboratories or to the spectacular borings which penetrated the interior of the planet. Modern prefab buildings and living units lined every wall of every channel. Men, women and children lay across doorsteps and in the streets, temporarily paralyzed but otherwise unharmed. Under the condition of paralysis there was just enough involuntary breathing to oxygenate the bloodstream and

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the cardiac nerve functioned sufficiently to keep the heart beating. It was a condition similar to hibersleep, and the victims were not in danger of starving even after days of paralysis.

On the basis of information obtained from the CPO and knowledge possessed by Haufek, they headed straight for the cosmium stores near the processing plants. They appropriated an electrocar, powered by thermatron units, and drove as swiftly as possible among the fallen pedestrians and stalled cars in the direction of "Clarke Street," which was the second cross channel from the locks.

"So this is Mars," reflected Buchanan aloud, as they drove along the main channel.

"Yes, this is Mars all right," said Winzer, who sat at the controls. "But don't get dreamy at this stage. I'm thinking of the *Carlona* just now. That Patrol crew must have come out of the paralysis by now and I'll bet the ether between them and Mars and Earth is sizzling with exclamation points. The party, I think, has begun."

"There's some kind of a night club," put in Puckett, indicating a brightly lighted establishment at the corner of Clarke and Main. "We could go in and cop a short one to celebrate."

The others ignored him as they turned the corner and examined the length of Clarke Street. A mile ahead the channel was blocked by the massive walls of a building that indicated electropulsion shielding from cosmic rays.

"There's our cosmium!" exclaimed Haufek. "By God, I think we're actually going to make it!"

"By now," said Winzer, "Patrol ships should be heading for both Martanium and *Balder*."

"Relax," said Puckett. "The *Surprise* is generating a beam over us. It may take them only a short time to start thinking of some other method of approach, but by that time we'll be out of here—with the goods!"

"We can beat them to *Balder*," added Buchanan, "because they can't take the G's that we can. However, after transferring our cargo to the Patrol Ship we'd better park it somewhere else to wait for us while we bomb Luna. *That* trip could be a kamikaze run. By the time we complete our mission and start a run for CGPS 10, it may have to leave us behind and light out for Teran."

The other three turned to stare at him.

"You sound like you're volunteering to be one of the bombardiers," said Winzer.

Buchanan shrugged. "Why not? It would mean a lot to the Revolution to cripple the Solar Fleet."

"There is a traditional method of drawing straws, I believe," remarked Haufek, quietly.

"How about getting hold of some cosmium before we go into all that," said Puckett.

The vaults they had to inspect were locked, but keys to the vault controls were available and they soon discov-

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ered what they were seeking. The cosmium metal for experimental and production use was put up in small units inside of thermatron powered cases which generated a continuous triple field, shielding the dangerous element from cosmic rays. Each case, on Earth, would have weighed several hundred pounds, but on Mars an Earthman could handle them. To the Teranians they were like so many suitcases.

In one vault they also found a few cosmium loaded space torpedoes which were similarly protected by triple field electrostatic repulsion against cosmic rays.

While Puckett and Winzer were shuttling back and forth hauling this cargo to the *Surprise,* Haufek and Buchanan made a quick run to the mining center of Martanium. The main shaft openings were half a mile from the colony, but tunnels led to the center of operations. They availed themselves of a monorail magnatram and shot to their destination in less than one minute.

Again they discovered paralyzed men, some of them sprawled over machinery and controls. Some, in fact, had been killed as a result of the sudden loss of their faculties, but the Teranians were geared now to the unrelenting machine of war. They were not permitted the conscience-salving luxury of remorse. There was work to be done.

A few shielded cases of cosmium ore, ready for the processing plant, were picked up. In the mine laboratory they came upon a man who Haufek recognized.

"I've seen his pictures in scientific journals," he said. "This is Doctor Fernandini, one of the pioneer authorities on cosmium."

"I've heard about him," said Buchanan. "He's a bachelor, too—no family ties. Let's shanghai him. He'll be better off on Teran, anyway. They can give him honorary Teranian citizenship as a reward—if he'll help develop cosmium resources in the Alpha System."

Haufek beamed with enthusiasm. "Larry, it looks like Fate's taking a hand. Everything's working out better than we imagined."

"You *hope!* Let's get going!"

The total cargo they finally stuffed into the *Surprise* represented the results of years of labor throughout the Sol System. It represented enough physical power to launch an empire —or to blow the planet, Mars, out of existence.

Protecting themselves with an interference field, they generated a paralysis carrier wave in all directions and headed for *Balder* at maximum sustainable acceleration. With them they carried the unconscious Dr. Fernandini, who was never to see Mars or Earth again.

CHAPTER 12

EN route to *Balder,* they picked up a surprise message beamed to them from a Patrol ship. Puckett was watching it come out on the tape, and as he gathered its import and who it was from he slowly

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rose up and finally yelled.

"Yeow! Look at this!"

Fighting powerfully against the heavy acceleration, the others gathered around him. The message read:

I.S.X. .9.18.58S. .630. JP. . .CGPS 5 to renegade yacht Surprise . . . By way of conversation until we get together, it might be advisable to tell you that our original rendezvous with CGPS 10 was also a part of the Master Plan. I don't suppose the officer you captured told you that. It was an ace in the hole, so to speak. So you see no time was lost when the crew of CGSP 10 came to life on the Carlona. Of course, by that time you had already reached Martanium, which is just fine—because I need that cosmium. Fine job, men! I told you the ramifications of the Master Plan were beyond your comprehension. Half the Solar Fleet was loyal to my faction before we ever reached the Sol System, thanks to the faithful labors of my half-brother, Luis Forral. Think this over. If you're smart, you'll play ball on my team. Last chance! Signed . . . Guess Who?

"Pomeroy!!!" they all exclaimed at once. They looked at each other as though confronted with ultimate truth in the clarity of death.

"But — Luis Forral!" exclaimed Haufek. "He's number one butcher of the universe, the right hand man of the Dictator, himself! Now how the devil did he come to be related to Pomeroy?"

"Ye gods!" moaned Puckett. "What a universe this would be with Pomeroy and Forral running it!"

"*And* Cardwell," added Winzer, bitterly.

Haufek turned to look behind him at Buchanan. "What's wrong, Larry? You sick?"

They all turned to look at him. The total lack of color in his face accentuated the coppery redness of his hair and crinkly brows, making of his whole physiognomy a clay mask — except for his brown eyes. He was not looking at any of them. He seemed to look through the walls of the ship into space and time. There was a barely perceptible rippling of muscles along his jaws but the cords in his long neck stood out in sharp relief.

"Hey, Larry!" exclaimed Puckett. "You got the G-G's or something?" The "G-G's" referred to violent cramps induced by prolonged acceleration or deceleration pressure. Only Haufek, so far, had experienced them.

"It's my fault," said Buchanan, in a low tone, still not looking at any of them.

"What's your fault, Larry?" asked Winzer.

Buchanan's eyes began to get watery, though whether this was owing to frustration or anger or pain or all three together none of them could tell. "Most of you," he said, in that same tone, "were for shoving Pomeroy and Cardwell out the airlock. That would have been the *clear, clean* stroke of decision, wouldn't it?"

The other three men stared at him curiously and at the same time considered what he had said. But as they

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failed to answer his question, he suddenly yelled at them with his fists clenched.

"Wouldn't it!"

"Hey Larry, take it easy!" exclaimed Winzer. "You're talking through your head!"

In an instant, Buchanan was on top of Winzer, grasping the front of his leather jacket in his fists, tearing it, bearing the other back against the wall, yelling at him through his teeth. "What the hell do you know what I'm talking about? It's something I've—I—"

A hand with the seeming strength of a robot grasped his arm and pulled him back, gently but almost irresistibly. He began to relax, turned around to see Puckett.

"Relax, Larry. Take it from an old buddy—you, uh, don't feel well."

Buchanan read his face, anxiously, and saw that a friend was looking at him, subjectively. Puckett understood! Puckett alone! He suddenly gave Puckett a bear hug, which helped him regain his emotional balance.

How could he explain to the others that in spite of his pact of death with Cardwell he could never bring himself to kill him? Even a competent psychologist might never be able to explain all the delicate ramifications of the complex in Larry Buchanan, the complex of inferiority solely in relation to Cardwell's personality. Vincent the Invincible!—the man with the Midas touch—the man whose clever hands were getting hold of some of the marionette strings of empire at this moment, thanks to Buchanan's complex. Buchanan cringed inwardly when he realized that this dark appendix attached to his own personality had already influenced the shaping of destiny for the known universe—adversely.

He staggered back through the cabin of the space yacht and sat down. Haufek, trying to understand, but failing to do so, walked back and gave him a lighted stim, which he took without looking up.

George Winzer, angry but trying not to be, straightened out his jacket and ran a hand back through his light blond hair, while he glared at Puckett. "What is this?" he asked. "A free-for-all or a Maypole dance? I don't get it!"

Puckett adjusted a dial and squinted at the sinewaves on the radalax monitors. "Larry's okay. He's just high strung." As Haufek came back, he reverted to the original subject. "As far as Pomeroy and Cardwell are concerned, I don't see where they think they have any reason to chortle with glee. We can beat them to *Balder* and have time to transfer our load and make a getaway again. And they don't know about our plans for Luna."

Haufek also watched the slowly shifting radalax sinewaves, as the *Surprise* automatically traced out the orbit of *Balder* on the basis of coordinates fed into its course computer. "Our cargo of cosmium," he said, "*must* reach Teran. And under this new set of circumstances that means just one thing."

They did not notice that Buchanan

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suddenly raised his head to stare at Haufek intently.

"I think I know what you're getting at," said Puckett, looking up. He and Haufek stared at each other and knew they both had the same idea.

"Well I don't," Winzer complained. "Let's have it!"

Haufek turned to look at him. "Our captured Patrol ship won't be able to wait until the *Surprise* goes to Luna and returns. It's going to have to take off for Teran as soon as it's loaded." He turned back to Puckett, with a camouflage expression on his face. "That barge has enough provisions to stock them for the return trip, hasn't it?"

Puckett recognized the camouflage and played the game with him. "Yeah, at least they'll make it if they stay as much as possible in hiber, and that government tub can fly. They may chop a year off of the *Carlona's* time."

Winzer had been about ready to light up a stim, but he suddenly lowered his hands and glared at both of them. "Now *wait* a minute! Who is *they?* You sound like you weren't planning to go back to Teran."

Haufek shrugged. "The Solar Fleet base on Luna has to be bombed," he answered. "Somebody's got to man this little old torpedo boat."

Winzer paled. "You mean—kamikaze? Be left behind, captured or killed?"

"Look!" said Puckett. "Let's not pretend we're heroes. Frankly, it scares the hell out of me. But consider the logic of it. Pomeroy's Patrol ship isn't going to take out after CGPS 10 right away because he isn't intending to go back to Teran—just now, anyway. In the meantime, the bombing of the Solar Fleet will not only materially help the Revolution along, but it will cause confusion and possibly delay the chase to retrieve the cosmium. CGPS 10 would have a much better start."

"But, I thought everybody was going to draw straws for the bombing job," Winzer argued.

Again, Puckett and Haufek exchanged glances.

"Well," Puckett drawled, "I guess that is the way it will have to be done."

Behind them, Buchanan had been studying both of them, with a new gleam in his eye. He got up, finally, and fought the acceleration pressure to come forward.

"Hiya, Larry," Puckett greeted him. "You feeling better now?"

Buchanan was studying the radalax screens, but he said, "Yes. A lot better . . ."

WHEN the *Surprise* settled toward the dark, rugged surface of *Balder* on a barely active gravitron "cushion," its crew could discern spacesuited figures standing outside CGPS 10. The two ships had not dared communicate with one another for fear of message interception, but all hands knew the current score. They were ready for a quick transference of cargo. The most valuable cargo in the universe.

"There's three of them out there," observed Winzer. "That's Jayne,

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Olmstead and Makowski. Nobody's on board the Patrol ship."

Puckett flipped a switch on the short range transmitter and grabbed a phone. "Ahoy there!" he called. "Where's that government CPO?"

Olmstead answered over his suit transmitter. "He tried to be a hero for dear old C.G., and almost blew us up. Forget him. Did you pick up Pomeroy's message to you?"

"And how!"

"Then everything is self-explanatory. Let's get busy with that cosmium."

"Nuff said."

"And take it easy on that landing! If you crack one of those shield cases!"

"You wouldn't even know it. Here we come!"

Each man experienced an intense exhilaration that brought a nervous sweat to his skin. The first, all-important link had been forged in a chain of achievements opposed by almost impossible odds. This was the halfway mark in Teran's twelve year wait for the controlling share in cosmium—Metal of Power. So far, success was with them. And for the frosting they had brought along Dr. Fernandini.

No one discussed the fact that CGPS 10 had to leave immediately on the long road back to Teran or that the Solar Fleet base on Luna was far too far away to send the *Surprise* there under remote control. Yet everyone knew that the Luna base had to be bombed.

With the exception of terse remarks relative to the loading job, they all kept their mouths grimly shut and worked fast.

Haufek and Puckett made an excursion to barge thirteen and came back with a mysterious looking load of metal, wires and space tools. When they dumped this paraphernalia into the dimly lighted cargo hold of the *Surprise*, they noted that it had been emptied of all the cases of cosmium. Only two shielded cosmium torpedoes lay there in their cargo straps, waiting significantly. When they looked into the cabin and the bunk room and the galley, they found no one on deck.

A few minutes later, Olmstead and Makowski came out of the Patrol ship's airlock to find that the *Surprise* had changed position. It sat on top of barge thirteen by the fuel bunkers and a spacesuited figure could be seen working rapidly among the lines and valves.

"Hey!" Olmstead yelled into his phone. "What's the idea!"

"A superfluous question," remarked Makowski.

"But—I figured we'd draw straws for it," complained Olmstead.

"And maybe they figured we haven't got any straws. Want to try to stop them?"

Puckett, driving the fuel pumps at full capacity, refused to answer their repeated calls. He watched the slow approach of the two men and worked fast.

Finally, he said to them, over the space phone, "You're losing time, chums. That star buggy is loaded, so

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take off—and good luck!"

Instead of answering, the two below began to climb the hand bars on the outside of the barge hull. It was very easy to do in the light gravity of the asteroid. They almost floated up. When they reached the top, they came over to Puckett and tried to take hold of him. And he had been waiting for that.

He turned, having made sure that his magnetic shoes had a firm grip on the hull. Before Olmstead of Makowski knew what was happening he had shoved each one off the barge so violently that they followed a straight trajectory across to the Patrol ship and collided with it. They clung to its hull and looked back toward the *Surprise*, momentarily speechless. Even though they were aware of the almost negligible gravity on *Balder*, Puckett's unexpected feat had unnerved them.

"You haven't got time to walk back here again," came Puckett's voice. "Now why don't you guys get going?"

Ten minutes after the *Surprise* took off, Puckett and Haufek turned on the visiscope and saw that the only man made object left on *Balder* was barge thirteen. They did not dare to use the regular transmitter, so they tried the space phone.

"Ahoy, anybody!" he called. "Anybody hear me?"

"Yes, Pete." It was Olmstead. "We'll soon be out of range on the phones, so it looks like this is goodbye."

Puckett looked at Haufek and grinned. "Tell Jayne to revive Fernandini," he told Olmstead. "If you can bring him around to our way of thinking he'll be a good teacher during your return trip."

"That's right. . . . We—ah—could say a lot of things about what you fellows are doing, but I guess there's no use going into that. You know what we mean."

"Stow it! Reception's fading. Give our regards to Lydecker."

"Well . . . so long Pete, and Bill, . . . and Larry. We're—"

A blast of static interrupted, and when it passed, reception had faded entirely. Puckett turned around slowly to stare at Haufek.

"He said—"

"Yes. I know."

They both started aft to search the ship, but they stopped short when they saw Buchanan standing in the open companionway that led down to the fuel tanks and the gravitron cell. There was a faint smile on his lips and a distant gleam in his eyes.

"You know," he said, "I always told myself that if all I was going to get out of this star trip was Mars I would jump ship. And here I am!"

Haufek's mouth was agape. "But we thought you were—"

"So you did! But I think the three of us have been shipmates too long for anyone of us to put anything over on the other. Nice try, though."

Puckett cleared his throat with an air of grave formality. "Glad to have you aboard, Buchanan!" Then he stepped forward with a grin and grasped Buchanan's hand, fiercely.

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All three of them were shaking hands and grinning like boys playing hookey from school. They came out of the sudden flood of their emotions and suddenly sobered, staring at each other.

"What the hell are we so happy about!" exclaimed Puckett.

"Ah—we ought to get to work right away rigging up launching racks outside for those torpedoes," said Haufek.

"Yeah. Let's line this job up right," agreed Buchanan. The gleam in his eyes was not so distant now. "A good blast at that Lunar Base ought to spill the applecart for Pomeroy and Cardwell. At least we can do that!"

"And it's the one thing they don't know about," said Puckett. "You know, this boat is well named, at that!"

CHAPTER 13

TWO weeks later, when Lunar Base detected the *Surprise,* it was too late. The little space yacht was cutting the ether in C-scale velocity and still holding to a G six acceleration. When the detectors on Luna picked out the two cosmium torpedoes, it was also too late, because they were way out ahead of the ship that had launched them. Within two minutes, the technicians who were aware of their danger knew that the Base would be lost. They activated the alarms and ran for the locks, as a matter of instinct, but intellectually they prepared themselves for death.

When the torpedoes struck, a twin nuclear blast created one of the largest craters on the Moon. If Earth's satellite had possessed an atmosphere, shock waves might have taken Central Government's greatest observatory fifty miles beyond the Fleet Base. At the time of the explosion, eighty percent of the Solar Fleet was on the ground. Seven first line warships and fifteen CGPS 10 class Patrol cruisers were atomized.

Fleet Headquarters on Earth was aware of the catastrophe within five minutes, in spite of the fact that the explosion had occurred on the opposite side of the Moon. Like a slow, ponderous tidal wave gaining crushing momentum, the news spread through the ether between ships and between planets. It was too big a story for even a dictatorship to keep from the people. Within an hour, billions of families were reading special news bulletins even as they peeled out of the wire-photo slots inside their homes. And what they read was confirmed immediately by visiphone broadcast.

Minutes before, Teran was a harmless little colony of overgrown technicians who supplied the Sol System with uranium, so incredibly distant that it might have been a myth. But now it loomed suddenly over the world and wielded an unsuspected club. In one fell swoop it had stolen away the total supply of cosmium and crippled the Solar Fleet. Teran was in revolt! Teran had made its declaration of independence!

An old, old cliché came to life

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again, on Earth, Mars and Venus, and in every space observatory and relay and refueling station, from the twilight zone of Mercury to the frozen wastes of Pluto: *This* is war!

But there was no great uprising and clamor of demands that representatives of the people should force the government to take action. There were no representatives. Instead, the people waited for the Dictator to announce his intentions. The Dictator was an old man, and evidently he had been sleeping in his beard.

As a matter of fact, the Dictator was already dying from an overdose of sleeping powders—forcibly administered. And to the rostrum in Central Government's Council Chamber came Luis Forral, who was the half-brother of Pomeroy. His swarthy complexion had the appearance of light green clay under the battery of televisor lights, and the hollows in his thin cheeks and under his beady eyes had been accentuated by sleepless nights of frenzied preparation for this *coup d'etat*. By his expression, it seemed that the unexpected blow at Luna had come to be considered already as a welcome political advantage, for he was uncontainably triumphant.

Luis Forral—the butcher, the man who had helped the Dictator quell rebellion by literally carving holes in the centers of resistance with bombs, bullets, deathrays and heat-sonics. The little man with the sleek, black hair and the sideburns who had earned a place for himself in history by using germ warfare against the ignorant and superstitious upper level Venusians, in the name of Progress and Civilization. If he did not inspire admiration he commanded the sullen respect of those who feared him. And fear of Luis Forral was universal because his agents were everywhere, even among the members of one's own family. Inasmuch as a visiphone was a two-way affair, enabling agents to detect those who were not listening, he was necessarily seen and heard throughout the Sol System.

"I have in my hands a signed statement from your Leader, who is too ill to address you at this time," he said, in a tone of vast self-assurance. Swiftly, he read them the Dictator's last will and testimony, or that which achieved the same effect. The statement declared that their Leader had long been aware of his advancing years and slowing faculties, and that it had only been owing to the lack of a suitable successor that he had not relinquished his powers sooner. But now, at long last, he had been fortunate enough to find such a man. John Pomeroy, veteran statesman and long time successful Governor of Teran, was on his way home. In view of Pomeroy's unfailing sense of duty, *et cetera*, and his enviable faculty of getting things done and foreseeing events before they occurred; owing to his great organizational ability, his universal perspective and unparalleled understanding of the Teranian situation, *et cetera*, he was the man best suited for assuming the responsible position of Leader. The statement ended in the traditional flourish of hopeful clichés, plus the tremulous,

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sinewave scrawl that everybody recognized as the old Dictator's signature—or a very clever facsimile thereof. But who was to dispute the latter point now, with Pomeroy and his half-brother, Forral, in power?

And now Forral embraced the microphones and the cameras before him, with his outspread, eloquent hands, with his suave manner, his silver-tongued voice and his brutal, penetrating little eyes. He spoke to them extemporaneously, emphatically, triumphantly.

"The newly instated Government will not corroborate the news releases of the old Government," he declared. "The startling announcements you have read and heard are not entirely supported by the facts, because—thanks to your new Leader, John Pomeroy—all subversive Teranian factions have been led into a trap of their own making. True, they have succeeded in bombing the Lunar Base. A universal day of mourning will be declared in memory of those patriotic men who died as a result of that treacherous deed, and we are certain that those responsible will be apprehended and be caused to suffer the full punishment prescribed by Law. But aside from that one tragedy there is nothing else to worry about.

"As far as the Solar Fleet is concerned, most of the vessels destroyed were obsolete and waiting to be converted to newer types. However, instead of throwing money away on conversions now we shall build a new and mightier fleet powered exclusively by cosmium.

"Where are we to get the cosmium?" Forral smiled sardonically. "You were told that the Teranians stole our cosmium. They only *think* they stole it, ladies and gentlemen. Actually—and thanks again to the unprecedented foresight of John Pomeroy—they are playing right into our hands.

"Moreover, we can definitely assure you that Teran is *not* in revolt—for the simple reason that it is not in a position to do so . . ."

He went on, in glib confidence, building for the astonished people a reassuring picture of unshakable governmental stability and offering them the firm promise of expansion and power and new interstellar horizons, predicated partially on the integrity and abilities of their new Leader and partially on the future development of cosmium—the Metal of Power!

That night the government owned bars enjoyed an unprecedented holiday business on three planets and several billion credits were earmarked for the Treasury of the new Central Government. Not that the people were celebrating anything, particularly in view of the catastrophe on Luna, but as long as they bought their liquor from the Government they were allowed to gather in public. And for the first time in years they really had something new to talk about.

Those big, lanky Teranians, living out there on the fat of the land. Who did they think they were, anyway? The new Fleet ought to go there and drop a couple of cosmium bombs. What the hell did *they* have to com-

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plain about! Whatever happened to them now, they had it coming to them!

The later bulletins, after Forral's speech, declared that certain officers of high rank in the Solar Fleet had been relieved of their commands because of dereliction of duty in regard to security regulations and facilities. It had been due to their irresponsibility and that of high political figures that the Teranian suicide squad had been able to bomb Luna. Perhaps this Pomeroy was going to be what they needed, after all. A strong hand, yes—but backed by foresight and ability!

TEN days later, the *Surprise* was en route to nowhere, long since devoid of fuel. Depending now solely on her single gravitron tank, she curved mightily away from Earth's orbit, struggling against the straight line momentum established by her original dash toward Luna. Somewhere beyond Mars, *Balder* swung along its vast orbit, carrying barge thirteen, which was the only hope for Buchanan, Haufek and Puckett. It was too slim a hope to be cherished for long, even in delirium induced by the crushing weight of centrifugal force due to their desperate change of course. Their air was already foul, and even if they should reach the *Belt* by some miracle it was improbable that they would be able to match velocity and orbits with the asteroid without rocket fuel.

Moreover, they knew that a cosmium powered Patrol cruiser had been on their trail for days, gradually building up speed to match and exceed their own in proportion to the acceleration sustainable by weaker "Earthworms." That they had not been blasted out of existence by a torpedo was an ominous substantiation of their conviction that they were wanted alive—for obvious reasons.

There was only one plan that seemed even partially practical. Since it was apparent they were wanted alive, it would be safe to allow the cruiser to come alongside. Once magnabeam traction had been established, they could take the Patrol ship, by means of the paralysis weapon, in the same manner in which they had taken CGPS 10.

It was the step after that that worried them. Where could they go in the captured ship? CGPS 10 had made good its escape because the enemy had still been handicapped by the element of surprise, but such was not the situation now. They knew that other ships had been deployed out into space between them and the borders of the interstellar gulfs. A break for freedom in a captured Patrol ship would undoubtedly attract a whole cloud of torpedoes.

In spite of all this, however, there was nothing else to do. It was the only possibility they could deduce from the circumstances. In fact, they had to capture the pursuing ship soon if they were not to die of asphyxiation. But there was something bothersomely sinister about the cruiser as it drew in toward them. It had not hailed

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them during any stage of the chase. It maintained a dead silence and moved in swiftly and with a disconcerting confidence.

Just before the two vessels were within traction range, Buchanan realized the truth. He grabbed the controls and shot full power into the gravitron unit. Puckett hung on to a wall strap while Haufek passed out under the additional load of pressure. They were all haggard, bearded, exhausted. But Buchanan and Puckett remained conscious, staring at each other.

"What's—th'idea?" asked Puckett.

In Buchanan's bloodshot eyes was the look of a trapped animal. It wasn't fear. It was baffled rage. "Cardwell!" he gasped. "Knows—our weapon."

Now Puckett's eyes widened. "He's got an inter—ference generator!"

Buchanan nodded. "'F we had fuel—we could ram him . . ."

"We're sunk, Larry. Maybe—as prisoners—we might come across—another chance."

"Are you kidding?" Buchanan switched off the gravitron and the sudden release from pressure threw them both into cramps.

They helped each other pull and massage the "Charlie horses" out of their arms and legs, and they worked on Haufek to revive him.

Puckett activated the controls of the paralysis generator, at the same time turning on the protective interference generator inside the cabin.

"Just for the hell of it," he said.

They watched the visiscope and the magnabeam traction readings, and Haufek got painfully to his feet to watch with them. The paralysis weapon had no apparent effect. The Patrol cruiser loomed alongside and drew them sharply in on its beams. The capture of the *Surprise* was achieved with a chilling efficiency.

TWENTY minutes later, the three of them stood before Cardwell. He sat at a desk, clean shaven, well fed, beaming with new confidence and power, and wearing a Fleet Admiral's uniform. On his cap was a large, single gold star with a diamond in its center. They had heard of ordinary one star admirals, and multi-star admirals; but this was something new, probably another deal thought out long ago by him and Pomeroy. They stood in the large briefing room and were surrounded by a dozen uniformed guards.

After a long moment of silence in which Cardwell studied each man, and in particular Buchanan, he spoke to them. "It would be somewhat traditional of me to gloat," he said. "But the circumstances appear to eliminate personal considerations. You are saboteurs guilty of several major crimes, all of which are punishable by death. I speak now in the name of the newly instated Central Government. I need not inform you, I suppose, that John Pomeroy is the new Leader. I am merely confirming it officially."

Again, he studied each one of them, while the smaller Earthmen present watched the tall Teranians in wondering silence. The three prisoners mere-

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ly stood there before their captor, offering nothing in their defense.

Cardwell relaxed suddenly into a less official attitude. Now he was solicitous, frank, intimate. "We have all been through quite an adventure together. In certain respects, our goals were the same. In others, they differed. I am sorry—*very* sorry—Bill, Pete, Larry—that you were not and can never be on my team. We could have gone far together."

After another considerable silence, Puckett said, "Shall we dance?" He smiled politely, through his teeth.

"Yes," put in Haufek. "What do you want? Tears? Or do we spit in your eye?"

Buchanan said nothing, but his bloodshot eyes never left Cardwell's face. His jaw muscles and the cords in his neck were prominent again.

Cardwell's only reaction to the remarks of the other two was a momentary narrowing of his eyes. He neither smiled nor frowned.

"About that cosmium," he said. "You might as well know what's really going to happen to it."

"It's on its way back to Teran," interrupted Buchanan, swiftly. "It's going directly into the hands of Lydecker and his Independence Party and it's going to be used effectively, because among other things Teran is going to enjoy the benefit of Dr. Fernandini's knowledge. Before you can build a new fleet, Earth is going to get blasted unless you accede to Teranian demands and withdraw your hooks from the whole Alpha System. You *are* gloating, Vince, and it's pretty damned silly under the circumstances. We succeeded in every one of our goals and as a Benedict Arnold you've flopped flat on your face!"

Cardwell only raised his brows in mild surprise. "If you're so sure of that, why all the shouting?" Then he frowned and fixed Buchanan with an angry stare. "But the fact is, you're all wet, Larry. We know all about your kidnapping of Doctor Fernandini—a lucky stroke for *our* side, not for yours! You see, Pomeroy still has to combat strong political and military forces here who don't quite go along with his assumption of power, but he planned, long ago, to have just the ace in the hole at his disposal which would impress at least the Military to come over to his side. That ace in the hole is the cosmium you fellows were so kind to secure for us and ship to Teran. Teran is exactly where we *want* it—out of reach of the opposing factions!"

Puckett and Haufek gaped, involuntarily, and they looked at Buchanan, questioningly. He glared at Cardwell and waited, tensely.

"Who in the hell do you think Governor Wainman is?" continued Cardwell. "Didn't it ever occur to you that he was *our* plant on Teran, along with those extra troops that came in on the *Roosevelt* just after our departure? By now, he and his garrison have eliminated Lydecker and his star-gazing altruists, leaving only a hard nucleus of practical men who know which side their bread's buttered on. When Olmstead and Makowski and Jayne arrive with their precious

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load of cosmium—*and* Doctor Fernandini—it will trigger the final plan for Wainman. He'll take over the planet completely and in accordance with the more efficient reasoning of our new Government. And as Mankind's first Admiral of an Interstellar Fleet, I am going to see to it, personally, that Teran does exactly what it is told to do!" His frown changed to an artificial, mocking smile. "I am going *home*—Larry . . . Too bad only *one* of us is going back . . ."

BUCHANAN'S long, powerful body shot forward as though from a catapult. Before the Earthmen could move, he and Cardwell were thrashing about violently on the floor behind the desk.

When the Patrol guards did start to move, they were met by Puckett and Haufek. Although Haufek was, among Teranians, the frail and intellectual type, he could still manhandle any Earthman in the room. But while he took care of them one at a time, Puckett waded in by the armful. Under the condition of their half G acceleration, the visible effect of Puckett's drive was disconcerting, in fact, awe-inspiring to these men who had never seen an unusually powerful Teranian in action.

One point was clear in the first minute. There was not enough manpower to handle the Teranians, physically, especially after five Earthmen had been knocked unconscious.

Puckett and Haufek both acquired machine pistols and stood in front of the desk, covering Buchanan, ready to shoot it out with the remaining guards, two of whom were still armed. Evidently they had been given the strictest orders to avoid shooting the prisoners, but the principal reason for their hesitation was the fact that one of their number had escaped from the briefing room and run for help. The Earthmen stood where they were, tensely waiting for reinforcements, and watching in wonderment the beating that Cardwell and Buchanan were giving each other. To them it was a battle of Titans.

Cardwell's bleeding face swam before Buchanan's vision in a red sea of hate, and he knew that altruism, Teranian patriotism and the Revolution had nothing to do with it. He was only vaguely aware of pain as he received Cardwell's repeated blows or his head smashed against walls and metallic projections. The main thing was the pain he wished to inflict upon the total source of his life-long frustrations. This was Vincent the Invincible, the stronger of two personalities which had been so close in times past that they might have been one. Ying and Yang, a unity of opposites, struggling futilely in a circle that had no end.

Because he could not kill Cardwell. He could only hurt him, smash him, release the tangled springs of tension in one destructive unravelment, without other goal or purpose than release, itself.

And there was Anne, Anne, Anne! In his arms on their island. The man with the Midas touch, going back to her with his gold and his power and

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his achievement, taking her from him as he had before, sharing nothing, taking all of life and leaving him none of it—after the years and years and the trillions of miles and the desperate hope and struggle.

Buchanan was unaware of his environment other than the elixir of hate in which he swam. There was only Vince Cardwell—a bloated, bleeding, desperate face that emerged out of the haze and receded, again and again. He was unaware of the gas that was admitted into the room, or of the bullets that finally crashed into his back.

He glided into an ocean of darkness on the surge of a negative exhilaration, to dream in endlessness of a broad world under another sun—Teran, which was far away in space and time.

Space—somebody had told him—*was* time . . . So far, far away . . .

CHAPTER 14

AFTER convalescence in a prison hospital on Earth, there was a barred cell. Remanded to custody of Central Government for further investigation, conviction and final sentence — which never came. Death would have been understandable, but the waiting uncertainty through the years and the final realization that he was supposed to wait until he rotted—that, Buchanan told himself, was the master stroke.

There was only one relief valve for all of it. He hated. He hated Cardwell with an emotion that he could feel, taste, smell, hear and see. It was a slow, smouldering bed of coals in which his spirit lay, like an old, battered sword which was becoming tempered to a hardness and resiliency it had never known before.

It was a two-edged sword. One blade was a heavy, super-hardened edge for the cruder battle of Self. The other—a delicate and subtly refined razor edge, fashioned for the battle of Man. News of the Interstellar Fleet's purge of Teran, of the disappearance of Lydecker and the betrayal of his people, the slowly integrating perspective of a universal civilization enslaved to the wielders of cosmium power, of Mankind tied inescapably to the strings of a Juggernaut machine that belonged to a handful of contemptuous Overlords—all these elements combined to produce a different kind of power metal, one that was not manufactured in the cores of planets and satellites, but deep within the core of a man.

Buchanan sat out the years in his cell, or paced them out, and even he was unaware of the fact that he had shed an old skin and became a different kind of human being. Older in suffering and emotion and perspective than he was in years. Larger and more powerful in the scope of his thoughts and purposes than he was in bone and brawn.

But in the midst of new light there was an old haven of darkness—a private little world that nothing would take from him. He hated Cardwell. He was going to find him. And he was going to kill him. It was a fetish,

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a cyst that had to be removed before he could be whole. Beyond that, life could begin. There was no doubt in his mind that the time would come when he would escape, because he willed it. He willed it consciously, and subconsciously, in wakefulness and in his tortured sleep. The years did not matter. There was his sustaining will and the absolute conviction that the time would come—the single circumstance he needed, the one alteration of monotonous routine that would offer a loophole of escape.

IN the beginning of it, he heard vague news from his guards concerning Haufek and Puckett. Later, there was no news. Whether they had been executed or transferred elsewhere, he could not determine, because so many years went by that the guards were new and were unfamiliar with the older history of the prison.

What was it Cardwell had told him once? It was on the morning of their departure from Teran, when they had had their argument on top of Panorama Mesa in the Gilbert Mountains. "What's a dozen years out of a hundred? Life isn't as short as it used to be." Buchanan had a habit of laughing about that, alone in his cell, laughing over the idea that Cardwell's words were a comfort to him, a thing to help sustain his mind and his will so that he could live to find the author of those words and destroy him.

"Sure, Vince!" he would say aloud to himself. "What's a dozen years—or twenty?—as long as I get out?"

If other prisoners heard him, they would roll over on their cots and go to sleep again. Or if they were up they might remark, usually to themselves, "There's that crazy spacer again—star crazy!"

Buchanan did not realize it at first, but his apparent "break" came at a time that coincided peculiarly with the number of years necessary for Cardwell to build his Interstellar Fleet and go to Teran and return. Thirteen years. Or nineteen years since he had left Teran, himself. He had thought, on that long gone day, that all he was going to do in the Sol System was make a "whistle stop," but the years which still lay ahead of him were to prove otherwise.

"Venus!" he exclaimed to the examiner, when the latter told him where he was going. "But—why?"

The examiner was like that Governor's agent, back on Teran, who had first issued him his visa to Sol. Semi-bald, semi-gray, and spreading toward middle age. The man had a shifty eye and was obviously more concerned about a luncheon engagement than he was about the prisoner's thirteen years of incarceration or his future fate on another planet. He kept looking at his watch and filling out forms.

"You're a Teranian," the man told him, without looking up. "Their life expectancy is greater in the mines than it is for Sol System convicts. There's a shortage of manpower now, what with the Teranian Insurrection and all. You might as well be put to good use and earn your keep."

Mines! Buchanan tensed. The ura-

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nium mines of Venus! He had heard about them. Deadly pits located in the borderland mists of the Venusian lower altitudes where the temperature and humidity were insufferable and men died as though stricken with plague. Earthmen, anyway. He had never heard of Teranians being sent there.

Uranium was evidently still used under those conditions where cosmium was too powerful to handle. Perhaps—in the Venusian wilderness—there would be a better chance for him to escape.

Suddenly, his head jerked up and his eyes widened. "Teranian Insurrection!" he exclaimed. "You mean—they've revolted? — against Central Government?"

The examiner looked up and observed him closely apparently for the first time. "Yes," he drawled, somewhat warily. "I guess you *have* been isolated from the news." Then he shrugged and went back to his forms. "Probably just as well."

In spite of the two prison guards beside him, Buchanan stepped forward and leaned over the examiner's desk, itching to pluck him out of his seat and shake him. "How did it happen?" he demanded. "Who's the leader of it? How are they fighting back?"

The examiner glared at him, trying to stare him down, but his face lost color when he really analyzed Buchanan's eyes. "Guards!" he exclaimed.

The guards took hold of Buchanan, but they might as well have taken hold of so much wrought iron. The examiner got to his feet.

"Do you want to go out of here flat on your back?" he threatened, fearfully. "I can authorize a hypo!"

Buchanan relaxed and returned to his former position before the desk. "All right! All right!" he said. "It was just a normal reaction. I was *born* on Teran."

The examiner sat down as the color returned to his face. "We are only too well aware of that," he retorted. "You might as well know that there is a revolution in progress, but that it will only result in additional misery for the Teranians. There was an underground movement and Lydecker finally showed his hand."

"Lydecker!" Buchanan exclaimed. A surge of triumph shot through him and he grinned. "I thought that little devil was dead!"

"He will be. He gained a momentary advantage by bringing some new weapons to light, but he won't get away with destroying the Interstellar Fleet—"

Buchanan whooped for joy. He could not restrain himself, even though the guards prodded him meaningfully in the back with their guns.

"Shut up!" snapped the examiner. "It won't do them a bit of good. Admiral Cardwell has returned to build a new fleet equipped with new weapons, and when he goes back to the Alpha System it will be the end, not only of the revolution, but of Teran—as you knew it." He stared at Buchanan, deriving visible satisfaction out of the fact that the enthusiasm

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was being wrung out of the prisoner's eyes. "Now. You wanted news. I gave it to you. Guards, here are his transference papers. Take him away." The examiner looked again at his watch and hastily closed and locked his desk. His work was done.

For Larry Buchanan, it had only just begun.

WHEN he had first come to Earth, he had been taken directly to a prison hospital where he had recovered his conscious faculties only after several days of treatment. Now, after thirteen years of imprisonment, he was brought out into the light of day and permitted to observe this planet which in his earliest studies had been the equivalent of Siam to a Hoosier schoolboy of the nineteenth century. It had been a place located beyond the horizons of his adventurous dreams, which he could never hope to live to see.

Yet here it was now spread out beneath him as a special sky coach transported him and some other prisoners to an unknown destination, and he was amazed at how little interest he took in it. New York with its thirty million inhabitants somehow failed to impress him. By comparison with his native city, Astra, this was an almost inconceivable metropolis. The much greater necessity here for centralization, and a basic difference in certain sociological concepts and practices, had combined to evolve a different architectural pattern than that of the Teranian capital. There were the concentrated cubes and spider web network of outward radiating magnetic trainways, plus the distant suburbs, on a tremendously larger scale, which was to be expected, but there the similarities ended. Instead of one cube and one annex, as in Astra, Teran, there were literally hundreds of cubes, and the space between them was entirely covered over with polarizite—a vast *Center* sheltering tens of millions of people from the more deleterious rays of the sun and admitting only those radiations which were beneficial to life and growth, a hermetically sealed metropolis, completely air conditioned. Outside this area were countless miles of prefabricated structures housing the working classes. Some of these working armies pulsed in and out of the monstrous city like so much blood in the arteries of a living Colossus, and some of them pulsed outward to man the great hydroponic plants that seemed to fill all the interstices between the magnetic trainways. And beyond, in all directions, on every horizon, industrial cubes of endless variety and purpose added their own silhouettes to the general configuration of twenty-sixth century Earth. Above the central part of the great city, itself, were sky annexes—great, floating cities, in themselves, supported by gravitron tanks and steadied by gyroscopes. Long mooring cables tied them to the rooftops and prevented their rising into outer space.

Buchanan saw all this as in a hazy dream, as though it were insulated from the stark reality of his own existence, because he was more a Te-

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ranian now than he had ever been and his mind and heart were with his native world. This, below him, was the harbor of the enemy, a world of enslaved people taught to believe what their Overlords told them. They were the instruments and the factory which supplied the "stockholders" in the Master Plan with the ammunition required to reduce Teran to the same status. Cardwell would be able to build a new and greater Interstellar Fleet, and when it was ready it would move on Teran with orders to subdue its inhabitants by the method of wanton destruction and racial debilitation. Out of the smouldering ruins a crippled race of human automatons would be created.

Across the long years and the great distances, Lydecker's words came to him now more vividly than they had on that night when he had first heard them: "If we are the very cream of the crop, by Earth's own selection over two centuries of time, then *we* represent civilization, the fountain source from which the future of Mankind will spring—and *they* are what is left behind! *They* are the old world, interring themselves already in one of the strata of history that is past!"

Then there was that old saw about self-determination and original thinking. Old though it might be, it was valid. Here below him, Man's materialism and his technology had passed from Spring to Summer. But in his mind and spirit the Autumn leaves had begun to fall. Man was no longer himself. He was a wooden-eyed marionette. There was a string attached to his every step and thought. His life was a pre-planned rat maze, from breakfast to bedtime, in which he reacted automatically to stereotyped stimuli, and if he ever met himself face to face in a rare moment of leisure he would run away in superstitious dread as though from an enemy out of the Unknown, killing time along with the opportunity for original thought, paying the Government another couple of credits for drinks in a public bar, desperately bridging the precarious gap between one period of response to stereotyped stimuli to another. Man was a robot.

But out there across the interstellar gulfs was Teran and a man named Lydecker, with stars in his eyes, yes, but with something burning inside of him that went beyond the stars. In him and his kind was the real metal of power that would build the last citadel of true civilization.

Such were the results of Buchanan's metamorphosis in prison. He had had time to think. And he was a Teranian, the last of the free men.

He calculated. In a few years, the new Interstellar Fleet would be ready. Five years after that—Teran would get its wings clipped short, and that would be the end. Unless something could be done. But what?

Seven years of time in which to accomplish the impossible, a convict condemned to short-lived work in the uranium mines of Venus. If only Haufek were alive and he could find him —and Puckett. Perhaps, between the three of them—

"You fool!" he exclaimed, half

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aloud.

"What was that?" said one of his guards.

"Nothing." He sat back in his seat and glared down at the Earth. Logic told him his dreams were futile. His new found willpower forced him inexorably along channels of resistance, as though he were starting to navigate an unknown sea without a compass. And blind hate told him that he would never submit to the machine that was run by Cardwell, Pomeroy and Forral.

"We'll be landing soon," said the guard.

Buchanan only grunted.

THE sign on the prefab roof said TRI-PLANET ENGINEERING CO. The space port was small and obviously private, but well financed. Buchanan's experienced eye took in all the signs of highly expensive spaceport equipment — a ten unit barge hangar, fueling docks, a stationary reactor plant for independent power source and thermatron recharging, a gravitron and electronics lab and maintenance building, private interstellar type transmitting station, lifters, space yachts, administration and operations buildings—a complete base. It was far north in the Wisconsin woods, located out of the line of regular inter-city sky traffic.

To Buchanan it seemed a strange place for convicts to be brought, but he said nothing. Nor did the other three prisoners, who were Earthmen. They waited in silence, with their eyes and their ears open.

As their craft settled to the ground on its gravitron repulsion cushion, a whole squad of guards in plain clothes came out to meet them. Conspicuously few words were exchanged. The new guards regarded Buchanan with considerable curiosity, as he towered a full head above the tallest of the Earthmen, but they lost none of their efficiency and self-assurance.

Inside the administration building the four prisoners were locked in a combination mess hall and waiting room. Here they were fed and told to wait. There were current news sheets and fotozines which constituted the real feast for the news starved men. As was to be expected, they talked together concerning their possible fate, but for the most part they preferred to read everything they could get their hands on.

Buchanan searched for news of Teran and found it. As the examiner had said, Lydecker had led an underground movement of scientists and old Party Members in a surprise attack on the Interstellar Fleet and sent its few surviving ships reeling back toward Earth, but not before the insurrectionists had been crippled badly by counter fire.

Certain articles on the subject revealed to him the fact that the Cardwell-Pomeroy faction had succeeded, through Governor Wainman, in retrieving the original shipment of stolen cosmium, but when the Interstellar Fleet attempted to interfere with private Teranian attempts to mine cosmium in the Alpha System Lydecker's revolt had flamed into full

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scale defensive war. However, a captured Teranian vessel had enabled Central Government to determine the nature of the new weapons and devise a counter-defense against them for future attacks. It was now a matter of an armaments race between Teran and the entire Sol System. Obviously, the odds were heavily in the favor of the latter.

One item that caught his eye filled him with a vague wonderment and curiosity. It had been reported that in Lydecker's camp Alphids were playing an important role as industrial workers. There was a hint between the lines to the effect that Lydecker's group had discovered new faculties in the indigenous little people of Teran which had never been suspected before. They were evidently proving to be of even vital strategic importance. Although the whole story was obviously edited by wary censors, the suggestion emerged that the Alphids had something in their makeup which was a growing cause for alarm.

Buchanan could not suppress a smile when he thought of the little Alphids becoming a menace. If they could be guided and would learn new tasks, however, their large number could prove helpful, he thought. But what were twelve million Teranians and five hundred million Alphids against the Sol System's billions? The outcome of the war was a foregone conclusion.

Unless something very unusual could be added abruptly to the total picture.

Inadvertently, he found an advertisement which had been paid for by the Tri-Planet Engineering Company, and he read it through twice, the last time with slow deliberation:

WANTED — PRODUCTION MANAGER: Monitor code — 1-2-1-2-4-4-3-1-4-7-3-4. Tolerances: plus or minus 1, columns 4, 7, 9. Additional: Capable handle all types of men and accept heavy responsibility, adaptable to extreme environments, steady, reliable. Five years paid experience production management in mining, particularly radioactive materials. Willing to travel and sacrifice personal comforts in exchange for career with retirement benefits at end of ten years. Salary: *top*. Write L.F., Tri-Planet Engineering Co., P.A. 5, Route 2, Box 707.

Inasmuch as standard monitor code books were as common as dictionaries, he found one in the waiting room and began to decipher the listed code. First column: number 1 called for the masculine gender. Second column: number 2 referred to an age between thirty and forty. Third column: Number 1 called for a bachelor with no attachments, marital, family or otherwise. And so on. A degree in mining engineering was required, with some tolerances. Languages an asset. The I.Q. requirements were average, but the physical requirements were tops, again with no tolerances.

He looked up from the monitor code to see the other three prisoners staring at him. They were not the cutthroat type. As a matter of fact, if

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they had been well dressed and cleanly shaven they would not have looked out of place in some high Government office or academy of learning.

"What is this place?" he asked them, abruptly.

One of the other three, who was the eldest, replied. "On the surface of it," he said, "it would be logical to assume that the Government had subcontracted a private development company to exploit the uranium mines on Venus and that this company has been authorized to process convicts in connection with labor mobilization."

"All right. Then what's *under* the surface?"

The other smiled. "In view of your size and strength, you might be considered as a logical choice. But do we three look like the type they need in a uranium mine?"

"Not particularly, so what are you getting at?"

"We are political prisoners. The definition of a political prisoner is one who dared once to think originally. The State does not like that. So here we are. It's an unobtrusive and semi-utilitarian form of execution. We presume that you, too, are a political prisoner."

Buchanan thought for a moment, and he remembered the time he and Haufek and Puckett pulled a Pearl Harbor on the Lunar Fleet Base. He grinned wryly. "You may have a point there," he answered. "But I still think you're leaving something unsaid."

"You're right. There's one more thing. The Tri-Planet Engineering Company is merely a front for the sideline private enterprises of a former countryman of yours."

Again, the three watched him curiously. Suddenly, Buchanan's eyes widened.

"Cardwell!" he exclaimed.

"Exactly. Admiral Cardwell runs a successful little side business of 'recruiting' labor for the Venusian colonies. Many a Teranian has been brought directly from Teran to Venus through the facilities of the Tri-Planet Engineering Company."

"But why? I mean—what does Cardwell get out of it?"

"Money, among other things."

"You mean — we have been sold —?"

The elderly man nodded. "To the Colonial Government of Venus. It can't be done openly, but through Cardwell's powerful political drag with Pomeroy and Luis Forral he can 'arrange' such matters, or rather, his underlings can. He's pretty busy these days with the building of the new Interstellar Fleet."

The amazing story continued, with the other two filling in some of the details. Central Government was a game within a game. Rules were made to be obeyed on the surface and broken in secret. The tremendous profits of the Colonial Government of Venus would ordinarily be divided with Central Government in the form of taxes, but labor expenses were deductible, in certain categories. The theory was that Cardwell's enterprises

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gave the Colonial Government of Venus a kick-back on prices paid for laborers, and thus the higher price paid the greater the kick-back and the greater proportion of profit becoming tax deductible. The Governor of Venus, it developed, was Luis Forral's brother, Enrique Forral, an unprincipled dictator living in the highest splendor and luxury known to human civilization.

Buchanan showed the other three the advertisement he had read, but they were only mildly surprised. The eldest of them explained.

"Another trick to trap technical help. You will notice the emphasis on no family ties. Obviously, such a person's disappearance must not be conspicuous. No one can actually be assigned to such work justifiably—pay or no pay. It is suicide. Naturally the company can offer top salary and retirement benefits at the end of ten years. Life expectancy for a production manager over the Venusian mines is far less than that. Ordinarily, people are not aware of these things, but our own presence here as political prisoners is one of the results of our having ascertained such facts previously."

Buchanan looked back at the ad, reflectively. "Who is L.F.?"

The other shrugged. "Who knows? The F may be for Forral, but I doubt if the L stands for Luis."

"Just who are you?" Buchanan asked.

The man smiled sadly. "I am—or was—an authority on the subject of sociology. These were my colleagues." He indicated the other two. "It seems we were writing a book, and our diligence in the search for source materials and true facts got us into difficulties. Not only did we demonstrate ourselves to be original thinkers. We simply came to know too much. Or we were political nudists. The truth, wherever it appears, is necessarily naked, and the State, it seems, has a strictly Puritan attitude in regard to political deshabille. One must clothe the truth in proper fiction. However, that's not important now. We want to avail ourselves of this particular opportunity to question you concerning your own world—Teran."

Before the conversation could develop further, the door of the waiting room was unlocked and their guards summoned them.

"All right," said the captain of the guard detail, "you'll be taken to the next station now."

Buchanan brought the advertisement with him. "I wonder," he said to the guard captain, "if I could speak to the man in charge around here for a moment. It's straight business and he might even be interested."

The man he had addressed turned to stare at him with an air of official disapprobation. "The man in charge of *what!*" he demanded.

Buchanan managed a smile. "Anyone who could tell me about this," he said, showing the other the advertisement. "I might have a chance of passing a monitor on that. Civilian or prisoner, it all ends up the same way. I'm a Teranian and my life expectancy might be a little longer than that

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of the usual applicant. I hear it's a tough job no matter which way you slice it."

The guard captain recognized the ad without having to read it. He hesitated, looking at Buchanan speculatively. "You got the degree?" he asked.

"That's the only weak point, but I might scrape by on the tolerances."

"What the hell you trying to do—become a trusty so's you can plan a break?"

Buchanan laughed. "Who's kidding whom? Nobody's going to break from a Venusian uranium mine. I just don't give a damn whose side I'm on as long as I get a few extra privileges that might go with the job."

His three fellow prisoners, overhearing him, looked at his face curiously and he met their gaze briefly. Somehow he felt they understood his motives and he liked them for their quick perception. It was the beginning of a possibly useful friendship.

"Come on," said the guard captain. "I think you'd better forget about that ad."

"Then tell me—who is L.F.?"

The other started, then controlled his facial expression. "Ask that question," he said, "when you get to your next station." There was just the trace of grim amusement in his eyes as he led his prisoners out to the spaceport.

In Buchanan's eyes there was the trace of another kind of amusement, which was perhaps grimmer still. So Vince Cardwell still had the Midas touch! He couldn't even stab him in the back without making something out of the deal. But—was this the "clear, clean stroke of decision?"

His jaw was set hard when he boarded the lifter. Time would tell.

CHAPTER 15

THE SPACE STATION was also a distinctly private affair. Its orbit was at the outer Earth limit, somewhere near fifty thousand miles above the planet's surface. Actually, it was a reconverted interstellar ship with cigar shaped inner hull and a ring deck, very similar in size and shape to the *Carlona*, but its great reactor and thermatron banks and gravitrons had been removed to make room for another purpose. The "cigar" was a labor mobilization station, and the ring deck was reserved for the operations crew and administrative staff. It was equipped with a sufficient battery of rocket engines to take it into an interplanetary orbit when required.

The mobilization station was a large "hall" extending some five hundred feet forward, with four office doors in the front bulkhead. Out in front of the offices were several tables, metal topped, with magnetic paperweights. Everyone was issued magnet-soled slippers, or deck shoes, in the absence of gravity. And some chemical "sick pots" were available for the landlubbers.

To Buchanan, a space deck in free fall was home, sweet home, after thirteen years of imprisonment. He wanted to kick off his slippers and wallow

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in the middle of the air, but he restrained himself.

In the hall there were approximately fifty "applicants," twenty guards and two company officers, the latter at the tables. Buchanan, again, was the only Teranian, and the curious stares on the part of the others were fully to be expected. Strangely, the stares of so-called "free citizens" of the Sol System had always been resentful, but the stares of victims of the State, such as these men, were merely curious, sometimes even tinged with admiration and respect. There was a principle operating here that Buchanan was determined to observe and study. He remembered that his three sociologist acquaintances had been ready to ask him questions concerning Teran. Come to think of it, these prisoners were all potential Teranians. Very few of them were the real criminal type, by appearances. On the contrary, they were the altruist type, mostly all strongly willed intellectuals or scientists who cared nothing for politics. In terms of psycho-monitor categories, if there were ten global perspectives here there were twenty cosmic perspectives. Very nice material.

Also in the same terms, there were a few regional perspectives, perhaps even one or two savages, or tribal perspectives. These were either actual criminals or the brawn variety of stooge who had been framed by those who had benefited by their criminal handiwork. About ten men in all were in these latter categories, and most of them looked like ex bodyguards, triggermen, or bouncers — large, brutish, quick to fight. These men, alone, were the only ones who greeted the appearance of Buchanan with some semblance of hostility, merely on a personal basis. He was the biggest of them all and therefore one to be watched.

The three sociologists were ahead of him in the line of newcomers being interrogated at the tables, and he overheard their names. They were brothers. Harold, Steven and Anthony St. John—famous authorities of whom he had heard even on Teran, academicians who studied the theory of government on a laboratory basis and who, unfortunately, had discovered certain basic equations for a successful civilization which included self-determination.

As soon as they were processed and told to join the other waiting prisoners, they headed straight for the suction tubes above the "sick pots," amidst the grins of a number of spacers present.

It appeared very much as though the examiner at table two had been waiting especially for Buchanan when he came up on the list. The man had an odd type of tan which seemed to be more a change of pigment than anything else. It was the peculiar olive complexion associated with a thorough adjustment to the climate of Venus. He was not much older than Buchanan, lean faced, straight backed, and as damnably contemptuous and impersonal as the worst foreign base personnel processor. To make it worse, he had a small, waxed mus-

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tache and an archaic, clipped English accent. Buchanan might as well have been a lower class English infantryman being processed at a nineteenth century base in India. At least he was certainly heading for the "colonies."

"You are Lawrence Buchanan, a Teranian citizen," the examiner told him, looking up from his papers. "You are also that same Lawrence Buchanan who helped bomb the Fleet Base on Luna—"

A loud murmur went around the hall, and Buchanan heard some of the remarks.

"So *he's* the ——!" "My brother was bumped off in that blast." "Yeah, I had a couple of buddies—" "The dirty—" "Hey, High Pockets! How's Hirohito!"

The examiner was about to go on when there was a general interruption. All present turned to witness the entrance, from the ring deck, of a very unusual executive. In fact, as it turned out, *she* was the Boss.

In her late twenties or early thirties, she was tall, lithe, and all woman. She wore a very sheer skirt that reached all the way to her artfully designed magnetic soled slippers, but it only served to enhance the visible lines of her long legs beneath it. There was nothing above her waistline but a sheer, deep bra. The fact that she seemed to be deliberately flaunting her distinctly feminine attributes before these woman starved prisoners revealed both a long-established self-assurance and an appetite for sadism. She, too, exhibited the Venusian "tan," on all visible portions of her body, and it was easy to assume that this adjustment to environment was evenly distributed over the rest of her. Nestling against the slope of her breasts was a glistening medallion composed of expensive teranium metal and diamonds, but what actually caused Buchanan to catch his breath was the fact that she wore her dark hair in the same Midnight coiffure which he had liked so much on Anne. It swept in pompadore style from the right side of her head around to a full cascade on the left side, crossing her breasts just above the medallion and passing under a jeweled teranium clip on the right shoulder.

She surveyed the room insolently. Her heavy-lidded surveillance was insulting, amused, her red mouth a combination of sneer and general challenge.

A number of the men were heard to make pointed remarks about her and some of the guards started to move toward the offenders, but she waved them off with an easy gesture. The hall fell silent.

"I am glad you slobs identified yourselves," she announced, without changing her expression. Her voice was appropriately smoky. "You're the easiest type to handle. It's the 'gentlemen' in the crowd who bear watching—"

Her voice caught as she became aware of Buchanan and their eyes met. With a conspicuous deliberation, her gaze took him in slowly, from head to foot, and she moved over to him, with as comprehensive a walk and expression as she could manage.

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There was the glimmering of a laconic smile at one corner of her mouth as she looked up at him and gave him a look that was built for two.

"Well, how did we find *you* on Earth, Red?" she asked.

The examiner came around the table and whispered rapidly in her ear, and her brows went up in some surprise. She appeared to take an even greater interest in him.

After another long look at him, she said, "Excuse me a minute." And she turned to table number one, addressing the other examiner. "You—ah—have an applicant for Production Manager?"

Buchanan's pulse leaped in his sudden excitement, but instantly slowed when he discovered that he was not the man to whom she referred. The latter stepped forward from the prisoner line as the examiner beckoned to him. He was a large, heavy set man with a bull neck, a wrestler's brow and little, glittering eyes—the bouncer type, but with some apparent intelligence, capable even of having a smattering of engineering knowledge. He came forward as rapidly as his deck shoes would permit and he began to talk first because he was mad.

"I applied for the job, all right, but I don't like the looks of the set up," he told the girl, at the same time wandering frankly with his gaze.

"That's beside the point," she snapped. "You're here now. You *might* have a chance of making your choice between being an ordinary prisoner in the mines or of being a prisoner with a few extra privileges and a slightly greater life-expectancy, but you're going to decide right here and now. Do you want the job?"

His little eyes looked back at her and then shifted to the guards who closed in on him now, apprehensively, their machine pistols ready. He paled. "Well—if that's the way it is—"

Her eyes narrowed. "That's the way it is!"

He backed away slightly and shrugged. "Okay! Okay! You don't have to—"

"Your first job," she interrupted him, icily, "must be taken care of now." She turned to everybody else in the hall. "This is your Production Manager," she announced. "The duties of our Production Manager are plainly and simply to get production out of you men. We don't theorize on personnel psychology in our camp. There is just one rule: The Production Manager is boss; if the rulebook doesn't work his fists and a club will have to do. The inference is, the Production Manager is more a man than the rest of you and can handle any one or all of you. Is that clear enough?"

The new Production Manager raised his heavy brows in some bewilderment, but gamely hitched his trousers up and stood his ground.

The girl turned to the crudest types she could find in the crowd, who were also of the brawn trust. "You there, and you, and you," she said, hand picking them, "are in the clean-up squad." When she had ten of them, she turned to the Production Man-

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ager. "Get these men to clean out the 'sick pots' — now! The place stinks!"

Immediately, she achieved the apparently desired effect among the men she had picked out. They were belligerent, especially when others present began to laugh derisively over the task that had been assigned them. Three of the largest men, who had formed some sort of pact between them, became vociferous about it.

"—— you guys! You don't see us doing it, do you?"

"Yeah, who the hell does she think —"

"All right, you men," said the Production Manager, moving toward them purposefully. "You heard the lady. Let's get going!"

For answer, the biggest of the three toughs stepped up to him and tweaked his nose. The Production Manager promptly lost his temper and swung, but never landed. The other man struck him. He didn't exactly fall, even though he was out, in view of the fact that there was no gravity. He merely hung over, arms limp, shoes stuck to the floor.

Now it was the three toughs' turn to laugh. "How about one of us takin' that job, lady?" asked the big one.

Undisturbed, the girl turned to look at Buchanan, and he saw a small light of personal triumph in her eyes. He noticed for the first time that they were hazel.

"I understand *you* were interested?" she said.

A sudden silence pervaded the hall, except for a rapid flurry of whisperings among the three toughs, who watched Buchanan sullenly. Buchanan looked quickly at his examiner and discerned that he had told the girl about his interest in the advertisement.

There was no egotism in his answer. He was thinking five moves ahead on the game board of *Empire*.

"It it's open," he said, quietly, "I'll take it."

For the first time, she really smiled at him, and a small cargo of personal electricity went with it. "You're hired," she answered, "but you've still got that job to do."

Without hesitation, Buchanan stepped out to face the clean-up squad. Before he spoke, he winked, almost imperceptibly, but he used a facial language that prisoners understood. It meant, "Let's put on a show for them now. Our chance will come later."

Aloud, he said, "All right, men. Clean the pots!"

Some of the men began to move toward the pots, but the three toughs stood their ground without moving, and two more joined them. The spokesman for the three toughs sneered at him.

"We ain't no —— honey dippers," he said. "And the last thing we're going to do is to work under a —— —— Teranian!"

Buchanan did not lose his temper. He smiled, almost jovially. "Would you like to tweak my nose, too?" he asked.

Unimpressed, the big fellow jerked his head. "Come here. We want to

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talk to you, Red."

Obligingly, Buchanan approached them, and as he did so, all five men jumped him. He took a beating, but it lasted only a few seconds. Easily, he knocked a few heads together and left three of the men dangling outward in the air, held down only by their deck shoes. He took the big tough and his companion by their belts and plucked them from their shoes. In the next instant, he leaned way forward against the magnetic traction of his own shoes and threw the two against the nearest "sick pot."

The other prisoners roared. But they quieted down as the big tough braced himself against the pot and flung himself through the air at Buchanan. Incongruously, Buchanan waited for his approach and then swung his arm like a bat. It hit the tough on the head and he came to a stop in mid air. Buchanan leaned over him nonchalantly as though looking at a patient on an operating table.

"I'm going to put you back in your shoes, and you're going to work. Do I make myself clear?"

The other was red in the face with rage. "Aw —— you!"

Buchanan's fist slammed down in the other's face and he shot to the deck, colliding with it hard enough to produce an audible "clunk!" He lay there unconscious, and the remaining members of the clean-up squad went to work changing the pots.

The girl waved her hand in Buchanan's direction. "This is your *new* Production Manager," she announced, almost gaily.

He learned that she was L. F.—which stood for Lorena Forral. She was the daughter of Enrique Forral, Governor of Venus.

Later, she ordered him to the ring deck and told him, "of course your assignment is provisional. The advertisement meant what it said in regard to the monitor codings."

"I'll pass them," he said, "if I'm allowed a tolerance on the engineering degree."

She smiled at him. "That all depends," she answered.

Guards were outside the door of her office, but for the time being the two of them were alone, as the door was closed. He looked at her with a growing awareness of what she was getting at.

But he said, "What do you mean?"

She got up and came around her desk and without hesitation placed a smooth hand on his ponderous arm. "It depends on our mutual tolerance —" Her eyes extended the innuendo. "For each other, that is."

Buchanan did not return the smile she was giving him. "Look!" he said. "It may be a bum start, but maybe you like frankness. You don't have to go out of your way to give me the score. You're a spoiled brat and you think you can buy any toy in the shop."

She took no offense. Instead, she placed both hands and her face against his arm. "I think Teranians are the only *men* left in the universe,"

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she said.

"You're a primitive without maturity," he told her.

She gave him a surprised, glad smile. "You mean I'm plain sexy?"

Buchanan's jaw clamped tight and his neck tensed as he looked at her. He turned to walk out on her, but she stopped him with her nails in his arm. When he looked at her again he saw her teeth.

"Listen, Buchanan," she said, swiftly, "I don't have to be anything but what I want to be. Where I come from, I'm the Law!"

He smiled at her. "Yes, my Queen. May I go now?"

Her face relaxed. She reached for a stim and lit it. Through its smoke she studied him.

"Yes," she said, finally. "You'll be monitored when we get to Venus."

Silently, Buchanan made his exit.

CHAPTER 16

AFTER a six year interstellar voyage and thirteen years of imprisonment on Earth, the pace of events on Venus was in some respects bewildering to Buchanan. There was too much to absorb and get adjusted to all at once. Not only was there an overwhelming influx of new faces, personalities and conditions, as well as intricate intrigue and politics to be understood, but adaptation to the world of Venus, itself, was a complex and challenging experience.

Volcanic action on Venus was the cause of confusion relative to earlier astronomical theories regarding the so-called "mystery planet." Some of the mountains were still very young, geologically, and a particular group of violently volcanic peaks in the northern hemisphere towered in some places above fifty thousand feet. The tremendous volume of smoke and volcanic ash these cones pumped into the upper atmosphere, combined with the prevalence of violent winds at that level, served to blanket the sphere in a shroud that had deceived the spectroscopes. The winds tossed these clouds so high that they obscured and sometimes obliterated a natural ionosphere. But what harmful short solar radiations the ionosphere failed to block were usually dampened by the heavy atmosphere beneath.

With some rare exceptions, even the upper plateaus were only semi-inhabitable by Earthmen, and for the most part the administrative centers of the Colony were established in moored sky islands. Another reason for this was the hostility of the *Braburnii*, otherwise know as the "upper level" Venusians. These were tall, powerful people ranging between the size of Earthmen and Teranians. They were primitive, superstitious, very numerous, and devilishly ingenious in the arts of guerrilla warfare. In the lower levels were vast seas of carbon dioxide and sulfuric gases into which not even the *Braburnii* could venture without breathing and cooling equipment; yet in these depths lived another species, the product of a different offshoot of evolutionary development—the *Gagandii*, or Peo-

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ple of Darkness.

A world of extremely variegated environments, of high winds and volcanic clouds, of sweltering heat, deep and dangerous jungles, of mists and sudden storms and often catastrophic earthquakes, possessing ten continents, eleven oceans and about twenty-seven lesser seas, in addition to uncounted inland freshwater seas, lakes and tremendous rivers, Venus was difficult to explore and subdue. In fact, after centuries of development the task had only begun. The main objective was not real colonization, but exploitation of natural resources, which appeared to be inexhaustible.

Enrique Forral, Buchanan discovered, was as old and ailing as Central Government's deposed Leader; a glorified remittance and confidence man, the type of old school politician whom successful executives reward by planting them in the financially or politically lush hinterlands where their practices of old are continued with less hindrance than ever, under the high sounding name of Consul, or Ambassador, or Colonial Governor.

Buchanan never saw Forral, but the "grapevine" was ripe with information that seemed to be fairly reliable. The Old Man, as he was known in the vernacular, preferred to dictate policy from his sky castle and accept the services of his daughter, Lorena, as chief implementer. The latter was so involved with her affairs when they arrived on Venus that he was monitored without her supervision. He passed and was sent to the mines officially as the new Production Manager.

It was at the mines that he received his greatest shock of surprise. The main uranium development was on the small continent of Hahddra. For the most part, its land mass was lower level terrain, obscured by the carbon dioxide atmosphere which was breathable only by the seldom observed and seldom contacted *Gagandii,* but its central portion rose spectacularly in a Venusian version of Fujiyama, minus the snow, twenty thousand feet above sea level. The crater on top was extinct, a ten square mile walled-in area that was only semi-tropical, one of those rare places on the planet that was inhabitable by Earthmen. Here Lorena maintained a private retreat and hunting villa, which she visited on rare occasions when she was not busy with the affairs connected with colonial administration. It was here, also, that a few of the more privileged prisoners, such as the Production Manager, were allowed to stay.

The mines, themselves, were a surprise to Buchanan, but nothing compared to that which lay in store for him when he met some of the other prisoners. The miners lived in an air-conditioned series of barracks which were located just above the carbon dioxide line, in a hot and humid atmosphere which was almost deadly to breathe. The openings to the shafts were below the CO_2 line and were reached by cabin-sealed magnatrams. Entrance was gained to the shafts through airlocks, but inside the temperature and the humidity tried to

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keep pace with each other. Geiger counters located throughout the mines indicated that radiation was also at the upper borderline of safety.

Buchanan had not been inside the locks five minutes before he lost his temper.

"What the hell does the Government think it's doing?" he asked the mine foreman who had accompanied him down from the crater. "Are they *trying* to kill the workers?"

The foreman, a short-necked, thick-shouldered Earthman, merely shrugged. "If you live too long you work too long," he replied. "What's the use?"

Buchanan stopped short to stare at his companion. "Listen. Have you ever tried complaining about these conditions?"

The other gave him a gold-toothed grin. "Ha!"

"Now wait a minute! There has to be somebody you can go to!"

"Yeah. Haven't you met her yet?"

Buchanan's eyes widened, then narrowed. "You mean—Lorena Forral?"

The foreman chuckled. "That's the dame. If she ever comes to Hahddra, try complaining—just once!"

Buchanan said nothing more about the subject. To better conditions in the uranium mines of Venus was not hs primary goal, but he planned to speak to Lorena about it when the opportunity arose. Come to think of it, his concern for the mines would be a good camouflage for his real intentions.

"Well," he said, after they had walked some distance toward the main center of activities, "if we've got to answer to that shrew we'd better concentrate on production."

"Yeah. Here's the men."

THE men had been called to the "meeting hall" by sub-foremen and they were waiting in anticipation of making trouble for the new Production Manager, which was a traditional sport among them. It was one form of sabotage and resistance they seemed to be able to get away with. Unsuspecting, he came out on a low balcony above them—and stopped short, staring.

A tense silence gripped the men as Buchanan stood there. He suddenly turned to the metal stairs to his right and ran down them. At the bottom he was met by at least a dozen grinning Teranians, and he found himself in the bearhug of a man stronger than himself.

"Pete!—you old swobbie! How come you're still alive?"

Peter Puckett was too happy to grin. He only squeezed both of Buchanan's arms in his iron grip as though to assure himself that he was real. "Shut up!" he said. "This is my first miracle."

Buchanan reached out behind Puckett and grasped a taller man's hand. "Bill!" he shouted. "Bill Haufek! Am I dreaming?"

Haufek was lean and pale but still very much alive. He smiled faintly and his lips trembled, but he remained speechless.

"Hey Larry, you old moon loon!

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How the hell did you get here?"

"By God, old spacemen never die! Larry! Remember me?"

They were all there—all his old space buddies from Teran—the ones who should have formed the crew of the *Carlona*. Herb Dobson, Ott Keffler, Phil Sutton, Lee Salkin, Hank Goodhew, Alex Jardine, Larry Pyle, and three other Teranians who were strangers but enthusiastic members of the welcoming committee. The Earthmen behind them looked on with some show of sympathy and understanding. For the most part, their belligerence had subsided. In fact, they soon crowded around the Teranians, vicariously enjoying their experience and trying to get in on the conversation.

The mine foreman on the balcony scratched one ear and looked at the clock on the wall. He shrugged and finally leaned on the railing to watch developments.

After a while, he shouted, "Hey, Buchanan! Let's get ahead with it! This outfit's got to produce or we all catch hell!"

Buchanan looked up at him from a ring of happy faces. "How long before the end of this shift?" he asked.

"One hour."

Buchanan wrinkled his brow. "And Lorena Forral is the only one I have to answer to around here?"

The foreman nodded. "That's enough!"

"Then I have only one more question to ask," said Buchanan. "Is there any liquor in Hahddra?"

The men roared enthusiastically.

Again, the foreman scratched his ear. "As long as you're willing to believe in fairytales, yes," he said. "But it's Forral's private stock, up at the villa."

"One more question," said Buchanan, his eyes narrowed.

"Yeah?"

"If I give you a couple of good men, how long will it take you to get it down to the barracks—enough for the second shift, too?"

The men fell silent. They watched Buchanan and their foreman, tense with wonderment and hope. The suggestion was tantamount to a revolution. And there were greater probabilities of painful repercussions than their new Production Manager realized—but they were willing to back him up.

The foreman was not averse to risking the newcomer's neck, and he was too smart to offend the men at this stage. It was a novel form of politics, an excellent beginning with the men if he could get away with it, which, again, was improbable.

"All right," he said, straightening up. "Better give me four Teranians. I might run into Drukh."

Buchanan turned slowly to face the others. "Who the hell is Drukh?"

For answer, the foreman said, "Ha!" and turned away.

It was the beginning of reunion—and it was the beginning of trouble for all of them. But the break in the monotony was worth it regardless of the cost. Puckett and Pyle and two of the strange Teranians came back with the foreman and the liquor—plus a

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story. They had run across Drukh, a huge, brutish *Braburni,* larger than any local Teranian, a freak Venusian giant who was Lorena's personal bodyguard on Hahddra. A considerable battle might have ensued had not the Colonial Patrol responded to the telemeter indications of the robomonitor devices placed everywhere on the mountain. When they learned that the new Production Manager had ordered drinks all around for both shifts of miners, they had thought it so suicidal an infraction of the rules that it became funny. The liquor detail had been allowed to proceed. In fact, the Patrol Guards politely helped them.

"Of course, what they're getting at," Puckett told Buchanan, "is that the robomonitors are all hooked in to every standard activity here. If we don't produce the required amount of uranium, or if we eat too much of the stores or too little, or take too much blasting juice from the tanks, all these items tickle a Master Monitor at Colonial Headquarters, and abnormalities simply ring an alarm. That's probably happened already, and Her Majesty, the Passionate Witch, will soon be here to chop us down."

They were in an eight man bunk room in the barracks, surrounded by all the other Teranians and a few Earthmen, including the St. John brothers. Beyond the closed door, the sounds of revelry could be heard as both shifts of miners tried to get plastered on the modest ration of liquor given to each.

"In other words," Buchanan grinned, "the Patrol Guards decided to help us to the feast that precedes the execution."

"Something like that. But the way they handled it it seems they're trying to emphasize the fact that this whole party is totally *your* act and responsibility."

"Maybe that's exactly the way I want it. Tell me. Any of you handsome brutes been raped by the Witch yet?"

Puckett looked up and found a few faces that were turning red. "A few," he said, "and they were Production Managers until they made one mistake."

"And that was?"

Puckett glared at him. "That Foral dame is the same thing as a witch, as far as love-life goes. Don't fall in love with her—she doesn't like it!"

Buchanan imitated the eloquence of his mine foreman and said, "Ha!"

The conversation drifted to other topics, and especially to Teran. Most of the Teranians present, including Puckett and Haufek, had languished in prisons on Earth or worked in Martian labor camps or elsewhere, having come to Venus only within the past several years, but there was one Teranian named Daniel Eckert who had just arrived via the Cardwell "Tri-Planet Co. Ferry," and it was his story that concerned them most.

Again, it concerned the Alphids, but this was the uncensored version and more up to date. Any news of Teran within six years of the present

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was considered as extremely current.

"At first," he told them, "Lydecker's outfit appeared to be merely developing latent abilities in the Alphids to the point where they could be put to work in the underground, but after the big clash with the Interstellar Fleet the real truth began to come out."

He went on to explain in some detail the theories behind the amazing Alphid phenomenon. It seemed that the Alphids had never been threatened before, as a race. The original colonization of Teran had been gradual and peaceful; but the attack of the Interstellar Fleet was a different story. Tens of thousands of Alphids had been killed outright, which constituted an ethnic threat. The conditions necessary for a psychological mutation had been latent within them, and the attack had triggered the beginnings of the change. It was an abrupt adjustment to a changed environment—a racial defense mechanism.

"Okay," interrupted Buchanan, finally, "but what *was* the change in them?"

"Well, individually, they look and act the same. In their conscious minds they are individuals. But when danger threatens, subconsciously, they become so much *en rapport* with each other that they act as *one entity*. This entity has come to be called *The* Alphid . . ."

"Interesting if true, but so what?"

Daniel Eckert eyed Buchanan patiently. "It isn't funny," he answered. "Imagine five hundred million minds suddenly blended into one. Imagine the magnitude of a combined racial will like that, the effects of singularity of purpose, the infinite variety of information that could be absorbed and made immediately available. Imagine a race with a single subconsciousness that works day and night, learning on a planet-wide scale, capable of exerting its will through any single member at any place or in a hundred members in a hundred places at once. *The* Alphid is growing, mentally, and already the Party in the underground was beginning to wonder, when I left, whether the Alphids were working for them or they were working for *The* Alphid. He's subtle, powerful, elusive, and so far incomprehensible."

Buchanan's brow furrowed. "Assuming all this is valid, whose side is *The* Alphid on—ours or exclusively his own?"

"That's the big question. Naturally he would tend to identify us with resistance against Sol and therefore the defense of Teran. But whether or not we are going to be considered as intruders, also, is hard to tell. Lord knows what's happening right now."

"Well what's this Alphid done so far that's so alarming? Can he invent, express himself, communicate, operate weapons?"

"He can communicate—and has—through codatape. Mostly, he asked Lydecker questions concerning the Sol System, Central Government, and the origin of Teranians, meaning ourselves."

"Hmm — leading questions, all

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right. What else?"

"Eidetic memory. Through various Alphids he has read everything on the planet. He may be inventing by proxy, through us. Some of the Party scientists came up with the damnedest conclusions in the secret labs and built things they couldn't quite explain. The question arose, if *The* Alphid is influencing *our* subconsciousness, what is the end purpose? The biggest question of all is: If *The* Alphid continues at the rate of development witnessed so far, is *homo sapiens* going to continue as the dominant species in the universe?"

Buchanan poured another cup full of liquor. "What you need," he said, "is a drink! A lot of what you say may be true, but let's not be impractical. Speaking of practical things, Haufek, have you done any more thinking along the lines of your pet theory?"

Haufek and Puckett both gave him a quick signal of caution with their eyes, and Haufek said, "No." Hesitantly. "There's been no opportunity for that kind of meditation. It was just a dumb hypothesis, anyway."

Buchanan was immediately aware that if he read the opposite meaning into Haufek's words he would come up with a strong promise that something *could* be done about the mass inversion drive theory. In fact, from the attitude of both of his friends he gathered that they had stumbled on something but were asking him to skip the subject in front of the others. Many years had flowed over the dam since he had last seen the two of them. And Haufek was a very unusual scientist.

"Well," Buchanan said, abruptly getting up from the table, "let's break this up. I've got to get that night shift back to work or we'll have more than the Passionate Witch on our necks."

"*Your* neck, chum," remarked Daniel Eckert.

"Ha!"

CHAPTER 17

BUCHANAN stood on the outer slope of the crater, a machine rifle in his hand. It was another infraction of the rules, but since both the giant Venusian, Drukh, and the Patrol Guards, considered him a doomed man, they let him have his way. His contention was that the men were entitled to fresh meat once in a while, if he had to hunt it down, himself. A week had passed since his arrival and the liquor party, but so far no repercussions had been suffered, which was taken by most of the men to be an ominous sign of grim preparations elsewhere. Retaliation was bound to come. In the meantime, he did as he pleased, and one of the results of his attitude was that the miners not only liked him, but had taken new courage and their production rate was up instead of down. Buchanan figured Lorena could put *that* in her pipe and smoke it.

He surveyed the panorama below him not without specific interests in mind. There had been plenty of talk of strategy at least among the Teranians. There was a faint possibility

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of escape, there was apparently a specific place to go, and there was a definite goal they had in mind. But it was still hypothetical. A lot of groundwork had to be laid and there were vital risks to be taken.

Far below him was a vast sea of clouds, not ordinary clouds, but the sulfurous CO_2 bank that separated the upper levels of life from the world of the mysterious *Gagandii*. Below those deadly clouds were dense, treacherous jungles composed of flora which were independent of solar radiation because they generated chemical energy for the purposes of reducing carbon dioxide and obtaining the necessary carbon for life processes and synthesis of the carbon chain molecules which made fat, proteins and carbohydrates. What oxygen they liberated was absorbed by the gills of the *Gagandii* and other, lesser orders of oviparous animals, and thus a complete biological cycle was obtained in spite of the weird environment. It was a world unto itself.

A necessity for migration from one continent to another had made of the upper level *Braburnii* a race of primitive chemists. Although their methods were crude, they had mastered the rudiments of science necessary to the production of oxygen by chemical means. With very crude but reasonably effective gear, the *Braburnii* could penetrate the lower levels and launch small war canoes on the hidden seas. With these and a secret means of chemical propulsion they had learned to travel. These facts were closely related to Buchanan's growing plans for escape.

Not far below him a much more enticing landscape was observable. Volcanic action still prevailed in the mountain at least to the extent that a few spasmodic geysers could be found. One of these spouted once every few weeks in the middle of a small, warm water lake that he had visited once before in the past week. From this lake a turbulent stream descended over clean rocks into several smaller lakes, which were merely large natural swimming holes connected by smooth, rock chutes down which the tepid water cascaded. Beyond the last pool a swift river gathered and spilled at last over a thousand foot cliff. This entire water chain was surrounded by semi-tropical forests in which both game and predatory animals were abundant. After so many years in space and in prison, this place was a welcome reminder of his early days on Teran.

He started down toward the string of natural swimming holes, intent upon taking a swim, as he had on his previous visit, and as he went he kept his eyes and ears open for game or danger, of which there was plenty of both. At the same time he was busy mulling over in his mind the implications of his last, startling meeting with Haufek and Puckett.

They had brought him a Venusian, a medium sized *Braburni*, who had a smattering of basic English. He was six feet three inches tall, broad shouldered and muscular, with the somber, olive complexion of his kind, a minor chieftain of a small, local tribe. Sul-

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len and wary, he had been typically reticent and difficult to drag information out of. He had given them the traditional warning that Venus was the exclusive property of his own people and that they would countenance no further encroachments—a remark directed in particular at proposed Colonial plans for opening up new mines further around the mountain. He had come to tell them that this would mean war with many tribes.

He did admit that his people admired the Teranians for their great strength and stature and that they were somewhat inclined to learn more about them because they believed they were potential allies, being victimized as they were by Earthmen. Curiosity, therefore, had also brought him to the little conference, to learn more facts about the world of their origin.

The end result was that he told them two things of great value. One was that the greatest Venusian chieftain, commanding tens of thousands of huge *Braburnii,* was named Ahahdd the Great, and that if they could ever make an alliance with him they might find a haven in which to prepare further strategy. He and his people lived in a hidden place on an adjacent continent, and the Colonial Authority had never been able to track him down and subdue him. The other fact the Venusian divulged was of infinitely greater value. It was this information which Haufek and Puckett wished to keep secret from the rest until they could make use of it. The chieftain told them certain facts concerning the People of Darkness below the CO_2 belt. These humanoid creatures were capable of withstanding great extremes of atmospheric pressure and heat. They were able to descend into and explore deep caverns below sea level and follow ancient volcanic fissures almost to the source of active lava. Story and legend had it that these people were the masters of a strange element which, when brought up to certain levels, would explode with a terrible violence.

Buchanan, Haufek and Puckett permitted themselves to believe that this could be nothing else than cosmium. With cosmium and a safe haven, and numerous native allies to assist them, Haufek might have a chance of developing his mass inversion theory. A slim, almost invisible thread of chance led through danger and hung precariously on the pegs of legend—yet it was the only really *big* hope they had.

As Buchanan divested himself of his clothing and slid into one of the warm pools, he compared this knowledge with the certainty that Cardwell was well on his way toward completing a new Interstellar Fleet, a fleet that would move ruthlessly upon Teran and blast it to ruins, particularly now that *The* Alphid seemed to be cause for alarm.

His head ached from the intricacies of his problem. He shook it off and abandoned himself to relaxation and the pleasures of the moment. He stretched his great limbs and swam about, enjoying the slightly gaseous water. The pool fed directly into

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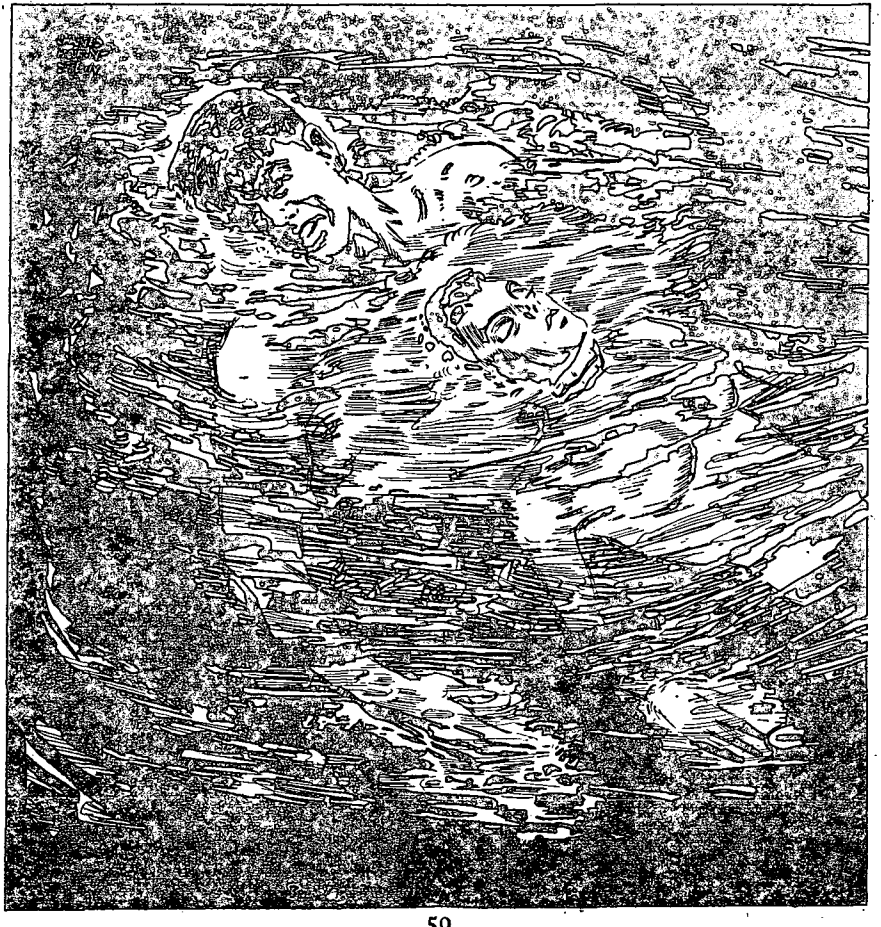
a stone chute that curved around a cliff and ended in another pool which he had visited a few days before. He was contemplating shooting the "chutes" when a great flood of warmer water enveloped him from the lake above. Unknown to him, the geyser had erupted. He was swept down the chute before he could start to swim to the shore. Beyond the pool below was the swift river and the thousand foot waterfall.

AT the bottom of the chute, as he shot into the lower pool, he collided with something large, soft and warm—a naked human body. He struck the other's head hard with his shoulder, and immediately the two of them were entangled and borne by



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the flood into the river. In the next instant he was aware of two more startling facts. The other swimmer had been knocked unconscious—and she was a young woman with long, auburn hair and a native complexion. He held on to her and tried to swim for the shore. In another moment she revived, spluttered, struggled in his arms, and screamed in English, "The falls!"

"I know it!" he shouted. "Swim with me!"

Together, they swam. She swam expertly, but it was his longer limbs and strength that finally saved them. They came out of the river just above the falls and she collapsed, near to fainting, on a great rock.

As he crouched over her, panting from his exertions, he had an opportunity to examine her more closely. Her face was not beautiful. In fact, it had *Braburnii* features—slightly puffed eyelids, a very small bridge to her nose, an upper lip that was equally as full as the lower one, and a deep olive complexion. Yet she had the features and the more lithe form of an Earthwoman. The whole combination spelled half-breed.

But she was tall, taller than an Earthwoman—almost as tall as Anne! She lay there naked before him, her deep breasts rising and falling with her rapid breathing. As he looked at her, her eyes opened again and met his gaze. They were quick, intelligent and frank. Slowly, she took in his naked figure and then studied his face.

"You—Teranian," she said, with the *Braburnii* accent. "Save my life."

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am—Aarri."

Suddenly, she sat up, threw her arms about him and hugged him. Before he could do anything at all to either resist or accept her, she broke away from him and ran into the woods. He sprang to his feet, ready to give chase, but suddenly realized how foolish it would be under the circumstances. It had been many a long year since he had experienced the sensation of holding a woman in his arms like that, and yet at the moment he was actually more concerned about finding out who she was. In the end, he chuckled and said aloud, to himself, "These jungles *are* dangerous! I guess anything can happen!"

He saw Aarri again the next day. He had been called to the mines in the middle of the night because of a minor cave-in that had killed two men and because of a fight between several of the others. There had been three more radiation deaths, and the men were getting panicky. Those original trouble makers he had first been forced to subdue on the space island had started it all over again. Buchanan and some of his Teranian companions had taken over, but he had had to work shoulder to shoulder with the men to extricate one miner who had been trapped in the cave-in. It had been a very rough night and he was worn, dirty and tired. Moreover, he was blazing mad and was contemplating summoning Lorena to Hahddra when he came upon Aarri.

It was at the villa, itself. He was

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on his way to his small quarters behind the villa, passing between the main building and the barns, where some domesticated animals were kept. At one end of the row of low-roofed barns was a large, titanium beamed water tower. Below the tower was an open air wash room for the lesser help around the place. There were rinsing troughs and pounding boards, inasmuch as washing machines had been too much of a luxury to transport to this area, except in the case of Lorena, herself, who had a personal laundry of her own.

As Buchanan passed this outdoor laundry he suddenly stopped and stared at the girl bending over the rinsing troughs. A tall, lithe half-breed with long, auburn hair. As her blouse was loose he was again able to admire the depth and beauty of her rather exotic breasts, and in the same instant her quick eyes raised to meet his stare.

She paused, looking at him fixedly, as though stunned. She saw a tall, heroically proportioned man, a man with a lofty, red-thatched head and a square jaw, with crinkly, coppery colored brows and a commanding pair of eyes from which the inner self could not hide. He was bare to the waist, carrying his light work jacket in his hand. His long, powerful muscles glowed with fatigue and sweat, even through the streaks of dirt. But how tall he was!—taller than she, as tall as Ahahdd the Great, even almost as tall and broad as Drukh! A strange, wise looking young-old man from the stars.

As he stepped toward her she straightened up and tossed her hair back. She was frightened, not of him, but of their meeting—here, in this place.

"You told me your name," he said, without preamble. "Now tell me what you are doing, here? What is your connection with the villa?" His eyes took in her torn garment, which was someone's petticoat, handed down—perhaps Lorena's. It was a faded yellow. In it she looked wild, a Venusian Gypsy—or better, she was the Venusian version of the Burma girl who waited for a certain British soldier by an old Moulmein pagoda. Again, Buchanan might as well have been that soldier in 19th century India. He was a part of colonial history repeating itself on an interstellar scale.

"I work here," said Aarri, with her *Braburnii* accent. Her eyes went to his hair and she seemed to want to reach up and touch it. "You— La-ree Bookan-an—straw boss."

He studied her for some time without speaking, then broke into a friendly grin. "Nice meeting you," he said, "again, that is."

Instead of lowering her lashes and blushing, she did the opposite. Her chin came up, her shoulders went back, as though she were proud to remind him of their first meeting. There was no indignation, only a proud eagerness to be admired by this kind of a man. But suddenly she looked about her, apprehensively, and turned again to her work.

"You must go," she said.

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"I was going. But why *must* I go?"

"Drukh."

"Oh to hell with Drukh. Everywhere I turn it's 'look out for Drukh!' What's that circus freak got to do with you?"

With head bowed over her work, she answered, "I refuse to marry him, and so he says that he will guard me forever to see that no other man do so—for he will kill him."

"Oh for—" Buchanan started to say, then merely laughed. "Tell Drukh not to worry. I'm not going to marry you."

She whirled toward him, eyes narrowed but blazing. "Then go!" she exclaimed. "Why you torture Aarri?"

He started to laugh, but paused when he saw tears in her eyes. "I'm not torturing you, Aarri. Forget it! Just tell me one thing."

She wiped her eyes and straightened up, again tossing her hair back. "Yes?"

"You have an Earthman's blood in you. Who was your father?"

For answer, she spat upon the ground. "*That* is for my Earthman's blood!" she exclaimed. "I am of the tribe of Ahahdd, who is my brother!"

Buchanan's brows went up. "You mean—Ahahdd the Great—is your brother?"

"By the same mother, who died at the hands of an Earthman." Tears of hate were in her eyes now.

"Do you remember him—your father, I mean?"

"Who would not remember a demon? His name is Enrique Forral."

Very lights burst upon Buchanan's consciousness and he staggered, visibly. "Then you—are the half sister—of Lorena!"

"Yes. It is my curse. You better go now, La-ree. I see Drukh."

Buchanan turned to see the giant Venusian standing on the back veranda of the villa, watching them. "So long, water nymph! I wanted to see Drukh, anyway."

Aarri busied herself with the wash, but out of the corner of her eye she watched him.

DRUKH was an inch taller than Buchanan, but much broader and heavier. His dark, glistening forehead slanted back from heavy brows. His great, ponderous face was somehow too large for his little, black eyes. He had that slight looseness of joint and awkwardness of stance that was characteristic of giantism.

"Hey Drukh!" said Buchanan, as he came alongside the veranda. "I want to talk to you!"

Drukh only glared hatefully at him through his puffy lids, in pure Oriental fashion.

"When is Lorena Forral coming here? I've got some problems to talk about."

Slowly, Drukh's thick lips parted to reveal a broken row of half rotted teeth. It was a malady caused by an addiction to chewing a Venusian plant leaf known as *djingan*, a mild narcotic that developed chronic mental lethargy. "You talk too much," he said.

"And you didn't answer my question."

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Drukh's enormous, lumpy hands extended into the air and tensed, with thick fingers curled inward. "Someday Drukh crush your skull like an egg."

Buchanan squinted up at him. "To think they used to use people like you in motion pictures!"

"What?"

"I said—how's your table tennis?" With this, he walked off.

But Drukh bellowed after him. "Miss Lorena come soon. You die, Teranian!"

Buchanan was singing an ancient tune to himself:

"Come you back to Mandalay,
"Where the old Flotilla lay."

Then he thought of Teran and a tall, stately woman with a Midnight coiffure. And the years and the light years.

He went silently into his room.

CHAPTER 18

BUCHANAN went down to work early the next morning. He arrived at the barracks an hour before the dayshift was supposed to go into the mines. The men were up and showering prior to going into the messhall, with the exception of a few veterans who were satisfied with a dash of what passed on Venus for coffee. Some of these were still in their bunks.

Puckett, Haufek, Keffler and some of the other Teranians, in the company of the three St. John brothers and two other Earthmen corraled him and started talking fast. They were already having a quick breakfast.

"You're just in time," Puckett told him. "We're going into a council of war."

"Where?"

"You'll find out. It's in the jungle near here. Three tribal chiefs have asked for a secret powwow."

One by one, they drifted out of the barracks toward the magnatram station and then disappeared into the jungle, to meet further along the mountain on a narrow trail. The rendezvous was only half a mile distant, on a large ledge in front of a shallow cave.

Here were the three *Braburnii* chiefs and about twenty warriors, waiting with weapons, ceremonial paint and war hides. The weapons consisted of long, poison-tipped spearguns powered by native made plastic bands. Also, they carried tooth-edged short swords and blood-blackened bludgeons made of something akin to iron wood. The ceremonial paint was not on their bodies, but on the ground. In accordance with their incomprehensible customs, religion and superstitions often bordering on black magic, they sat or stood in proper positions within an intricate design they had painted in vivid blue colors with vegetable powders. The war hides, representing various short-haired killers of the jungle, they wore over their heads and draped across their broad shoulders and down their sweating backs. Native jewelry made of precious metals and painted bone completed the savage picture that met their eyes as they came upon the

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place. There was not one *Braburni* present who was under six feet three inches or weighed less than two hundred and twenty pounds. One man, the strongest chieftain, who turned out to be the spokesman, was taller than Puckett. They came to a stop before a line drawn on the rock ledge, beyond which they were told not to pass.

The spokesman knew no English but spoke through a *Braburni* interpreter. "Who," he asked, "is chief among you?"

The general reaction of the Earthmen and the Teranians soon brought the man's eyes to rest on Buchanan. "Ah yes, the Son of Fire. It is fitting," he remarked.

There ensued a discussion which was remarkable for its brevity and its comprehensiveness. The *Braburnii* recognized all prisoners of the uranium mines of Hahddra, and especially the Teranians, as political allies in their perpetual fight against the usurpation of the Earthman's so-called Central Government. They had heard, especially, of the lean, fair-haired wizard named "Haoo-fehk" and wanted to know how much he had mastered of the whiteman's magic that could make the death light flow in wires and make day of night and run machines to carve out the bowels of the world, and who could lift whole cities of men into the skies and make his houses fly beyond the sky to other worlds. The *Braburnii* realized that they had to fight fire with fire and acquire this witchcraft. If "Haoo-fehk" could teach some of it to them, they would help them escape to the country of Ahahdd the Great.

In fact, it was word from Ahahdd, himself, which had motivated this meeting. He was sending a fleet of war canoes through the Seas of Darkness below the death mists, already offering them asylum—on one condition.

"You must bring with you one woman, Aarri, who carries the ancestral blood of Ahahdd, because she is his sister."

Haufek and Puckett looked at Buchanan, puzzled.

"I—ah—met her," said Buchanan. "I don't see why that should be so hard to do."

"It is a warrior's test," said the chieftain, meaning that it was perhaps almost suicidal. "She has tried many times to escape from Hahddra, but always she is caught and punished. Many times has she felt the whiplash of Drukh because of this."

Buchanan's brow furrowed. "I understood Drukh was in love with her."

"He is a madman with love for the half-breed."

"Then—how come he—"

The chieftain smiled. "The Son of Fire does not know the custom of our people."

"How about it, Larry?" queried Puckett. "Can you get hold of her?"

"I don't see why not, but—say, chief, do you mind if we talk this over for a minute among ourselves?"

With due ceremony, they retreated some twenty yards.

"What are we getting into?" Buchanan asked his companions in a

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low voice. "Remember back in history when the whitemen sold rifles to the American Indians? All it accomplished was to get more Indians killed. In this case, that's not such a good idea. We need these Venusians. And if we get over to this other continent, then what? Without modern laboratory facilities what can we do?"

"Build them," said Haufek. "Through the *Braburnii* underground we can get a lot of things."

"Nuts!" retorted Buchanan. "That's years, gambling precious time on wishful thinking."

"Any better ideas?" asked Puckett.

"Just another drawback. How do we get across the intervening water with the Colonial Patrol looking right down our necks with radalax? They'd spot us in five minutes and blow us out of the mist."

"There's a way to confuse them," said Haufek. "Very simple strategy coupled with a simple piece of apparatus which I have already built. Leave that detail to me for now. We can get across."

"Come on, Buchanan," urged another Teranian, "let's make a decision."

"If I got this girl, Aarri, when would we make the break?"

"Let's ask the chief over there."

In a body, they moved back to the parley line and started conversation again, through the stony faced interpreter.

"The extra boats will be here tonight," replied the chieftain. "It is wise to use them quickly before they are discovered by the magic eye of skyboat."

"At the end of the second shift," suggested Puckett.

Buchanan shrugged. "All right. I'll bring her."

The pact was sealed officially with a little silent war jig on the part of the *Braburnii*. There was something they said about the new Dawn of Vengeance, but the Teranians and the Earthmen were already too much occupied with their own plans to pay much attention.

"Tonight, then," said Puckett, for the others, as they reached the magnatram station. "At the end of second shift. For God's sake don't slip, because we'll all be off our posts, the tribes will be gathering with their breathing equipment, and the monitors will be screaming to Headquarters. We can't back out then."

"I'll be there," said Buchanan, "with Aarri."

AT the end of the first shift, Buchanan double-checked all the miners, including the foreman, and found that they were all well briefed on the plan. All the oxygen equipment they had on the premises had been collected in readiness, as well as Haufek's special gear for jamming up the Patrol's radalax. Small, inconspicuous details of men from the first shift were already carrying this to the meeting place with the *Braburnii*, and the latter were taking it all down into the CO_2 belt and the boats. Having helped organize and set all this in motion, Buchanan headed up mountain for the villa.

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But when he got there, he ran into the last person he had hoped to see. Lorena Forral had arrived and a platoon of Patrol Guards stood around on the veranda in grinning expectation of an immediate execution.

"Well, Red," she addressed him, abruptly, "I understand your education has not yet been completed."

She stood on the steps of the villa in a two-piece lounging pajama of sheer, red plastiglas, and he had to admit she was as beautiful as Hell could have made her. In her hand was a long whip. She fixed him with a gaze, under long lashes, that he could not quite fathom.

"I won't waste your time or mine," replied Buchanan, his mind working rapidly in the emergency which faced him. "I took your liquor and gave it to the men, which was retaliation on my part for the hell hole you have allowed them to work in. You're not God, and I'll be damned if I'll submit to your assumed power of life and death. You said a Production Manager's first job was production. Look at your monitor readings and you'll see no cause for complaining. I'm busy." He hadn't intended quite the hot tone he used, but he could not resist telling her off, in spite of the precarious situation. Yet on the other hand he sensed that a certain amount of justifiable boldness would find favor in her eyes.

The guards tensed, and some of them placed their hands on their machine pistols, watching Lorena, but she remained calm, never taking her eyes from him. The whip flicked once or twice in her hand, making little ripples.

"I have no quarrel," she said, "with the production rate. But insubordination is an ugly crack in the wall of Authority and must always be quickly repaired." Her eyes widened in a flash of command. "Buchanan, you will go to your quarters!"

Like a bad little boy. Still, that wouldn't be so bad if it would give him time—time to sneak out and find Aarri before the fireworks began. He shrugged and went on his way, impervious to the derisive laughter of the Patrol Guards.

Pretending that he understood he was to retire without his supper, he took a shower and got into his sleeping shorts. He lay on his cot staring at the ceiling, thinking fast. Executions usually occurred at dawn. It was a historical tradition, at least in a military sense. If he were to get it tonight he wouldn't have been sent to his quarters. Therefore, he might still have time, even though he'd be under close watch. Later, when the place quieted down—

The door opened. It was night. In the black frame stood Lorena, as before, with the whip in her hand. The light from the glo-panels on the walls almost rendered her two piece pajamas transparent. It was as though she were naked, bathed in ruby flame. Hell, he thought, is a woman. He sat up, bringing his feet to the floor.

"I told you once," she fired at him, "that *I* am the Law! I wish to inform you that I have dismissed the Patrol

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Guard and sent them aloft again. We are alone."

Except for Drukh, thought Buchanan, but that didn't matter now. His pulse leapt with sudden hope. Only a woman and a dumb ape between him and success!

"Well, that makes it cozy—" he began. But he leaped straight into the air and yelled as the whip flashed heavily across his face and drew blood. He stood there wiping the blood away and glaring at her with the threat of murder in his eyes. "Why you dirty little b—"

"Crack!" The whip bit into his neck and shoulders. "Crack!" It bit into his bare back. "Crack!" It drew blood from the calves of his legs.

Furiously, uncontrollably, she flicked the whip, as though she were intent upon killing him with it. Her teeth flashed, her lips drawn back tight, her eyes blazing.

Half blinded with pain and rage, and fearing that the whip would strike his eyes, he reached out for it. Finally, it wound around his right wrist and with one titanic heave he jerked it out of her grasp. But he didn't let go of it. He flipped it in toward him and caught its handle.

Before she could escape through the door he leaped forward and blocked her, closing the door and locking it. He ducked and swung just in time to block her thrust with a dagger that she pulled out of a hidden sheath in her bra. The dagger clattered into one corner and she was flung into another. She glared up at him, still furious. He stood there, bleeding

Lorena Forral

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from the long gashes she had cut on his face and neck and stomach and legs. As he glared at her he weighed the whip in his hand, speculatively.

"You wouldn't!" she cried out, more in the tone of a command than in fear.

"Now aren't you the foolish little virgin from Hell!" he retorted. At the same time he swung the whip with all his strength and cut her shoulder open.

She screamed and almost swooned. He dashed forward and slapped her mouth hard with the back of his hand.

"Shut up!" he told her.

She looked up at him, startled, frightened. Then she was mad again. She reached for the whip, but he threw it away. She struggled with him, scratched, bit—and he beat her repeatedly with the back of his hand.

Finally she stood there breathlessly, her lips swollen, her shoulder a mass of blood. He looked down at her face, then lower, at her half-demolished bra.

"You asked for this," he said. "The hard way!" And he suddenly crushed her to him and kissed her on the mouth hard enough to bruise her again.

She tensed, then her arms started to go around his neck. At which moment he threw her onto the cot and stood there laughing at her.

"You bitch! That's all you came for!"

She stared at him tensely, like an animal, her face white with strain. Suddenly, she was on her feet again, her arms around his neck, pressing her lips — and her warm body — against him. Fiercely.

"You're the first one who ever knew how to handle me," she gasped. "It's true! This is what I came for!"

"You'd better get that shoulder taken care of. And never try using a whip on me again, understand?" He shook her, mauling her shoulders with deliberate roughness.

Her lips trembled. "If you disappoint me now, I'll kill you!" she warned. Then she kissed him several times, rapidly. "Wait here. I'll be back."

Buchanan thought — "Ha!" Fat chance.

THE moment she left, he cursed himself. He should have tied her up and gotten her out of the way. So now he would have to wait until she came back. He was certain she would return. In her condition—

He washed up and applied medication to his wounds. Then he turned out the lights and lay on his cot, resting and waiting.

What a woman! A pity she was a shrew like that.

So many long years it had been, since— But tonight was vital for other reasons. Down the mountain the stage was being set for the exodus. A hundred men depending on him, and the tribes were preparing the boats. Soon all would be in readiness. He had to get Lorena out of the way.

The door to his quarters opened once more and he discerned the dark outline of a woman entering before the door closed behind her. Before

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he could wonder if she had another dagger, she was in his arms, sobbing.

"She whipped you! She's a living demon! I hate her!"

He sat up, startled, reaching for the light switch.

"Don't turn on light. It is Aarri."

"Aarri! What are you doing here? Don't answer that! It's a good thing you are. I want you to hide in my closet until I take care of her. She's coming back."

"Don't trust her. You must go now, with me. Take me away with you, La-ree. I love you. I help you!"

"Omigawd!"

"What you say, La-ree?"

"I say maybe you're right. We'd better get out of here. It might be a trap."

"You will take me?"

"I came here to get you."

Before he could prevent it, she had her arms around him. He suddenly felt lips on his such as he had never known. A soft, strong chain suddenly bound him there, holding her to him, in spite of the urgency of the situation down the mountain. His arms went about her for a moment, and he drank the tenderness she gave him.

Suddenly, the door to his quarters burst open and a giant shadow loomed in it. A lesser shadow was beside it, holding a powerful flashlight. Its beam caught Buchanan and Aarri in each others' arms.

Buchanan lurched for the light switch and flicked it on just as Drukh shouldered his huge bulk through the entrance, his ponderous face trembling with murderous rage.

Behind him, Lorena screamed, "Kill him!"

(To be concluded)

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Those lovable, laughable Hokas are back again, bringing confusion and chaos to the life of Earth's ambassador to Toka. The ambassador? Who else but Alexander Jones, formerly of the T. I. S. S. S. and ex-Sheriff of Canyon Gulch.

In Hoka Signo Vinces

By

Poul Anderson & Gordon Dickson

Illustrated by Edd Cartier

"SNORT!" snorted Alexander Jones.

"What, dear?" inquired Tanni.

"It's those Pornians," he grumbled from behind the newsfax sheet he was holding, still damp off the subspace receiver. "They've finished building that battleship, and now they're putting her into space."

"How awful!" said Tanni musically.

Jones lowered the newssheet and gazed fondly at her blonde beauty. He could never quite get over the exaltation of being married to Tanni. That such fortune could be his had never occurred to him when he was a lowly ensign in the Terrestrial Interstellar Survey Service—but that was before an accident had dumped him here on Toka and made him an expert on the native Hokas. Later it had been found that the planet held valuable mineral deposits, and it was decided to incorporate the Hokas into civilization so that Earth could trade with them. Jones was the logical choice of plenipotentiary, and he had jumped at the chance. His duties were light: to reside here in the coastal city-state Mixumaxu, introducing the natives gradually to modern technology, leading them toward the eventual formation of their own world government, and in general doing what he could to build up good will for his own race. Of course, the reports he had to file were a nuisance, but still he had the rank and pay of an ambassador—nice for a young man.

It was that stroke of luck which had enabled him to marry Tanni and provide a home for her. To be sure,

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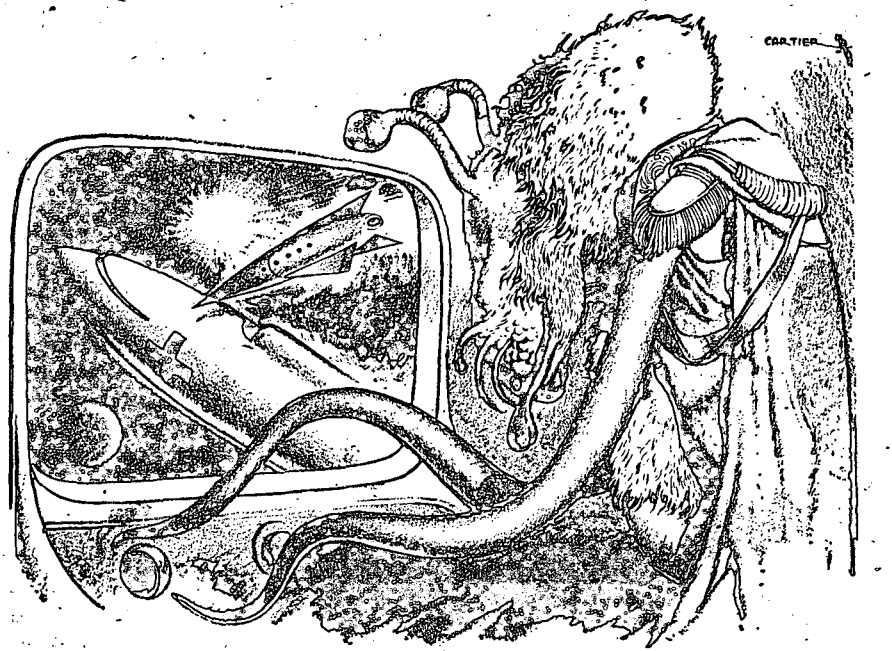

he thought, even ambassadorial quarters on a new planet were not quite the ideal home for a recent bride, and the Hokas were—well—a little odd, to say the least. But it could have been worse. Mixumaxu was fairly civilized; he could have been stationed among the Wild West addicts of the plains, where he had first crash-landed.

Jones shuddered a little. He had never really lived down the shame of being elected Sheriff of Canyon Gulch. True, he had redeemed himself by getting drunk and stampeding a herd of reptilian cattle into the attacking Slissii—or Injuns, as the Hokas insisted on calling them. This had resulted in his being raised to the honored post of town gambler. But even so—Well, the whole episode was past now, and it had never gotten into his official record.

The trouble was, thought Jones, that the Hokas were just too enthusiastic and imaginative, too inclined to go hog wild over any new concept, too little able to distinguish fiction from fact. The plains tribes had taken one look at the archaic Western books and stereofilms left behind by the first human expedition and adopted the cowboy life, complete with sixguns, chaps, roundups, Montys, Slicks,

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Lone Riders, Injuns . . . Well, at least Mixumaxu had kept its sanity to date.

"I think that's terrible," said Tanni indignantly. "You'd think the other planetary governments would get together and stop them."

"What?" asked Jones, jerked back to the present.

"Those Pornians and their space dreadnaught."

"Oh, that!" said Jones. "Well, you see, the trouble is, after the last war all the civilized races agreed to complete disarmament. There's no military to speak of anywhere in the known parts of the Galaxy, and the taxpayers wouldn't stand for any. Damn fool thing, too—" Jones started to fume again. "We need some kind of interstellar police to stop fanatic racialists like those Pornians from building weapons. Why, something like this ship could spoil two hundred years of peace and goodwill, it could wreck the Interbeing League and start an armaments race—" He got abruptly to his feet. "Where's the subspace video? I want to see what Earth Headquarters has to say in today's bulletins." The newsfax was sent from a local bureau a mere fifty light-years away; only an ambassador could afford a receiver for programs sent all the way from Earth.

"I put it on the porch, dear," said Tanni. "That program the Hokas like so much—you know, *Tom Bracken of the Space Patrol*—it was on and they came to see it like they do every day."

Jones frowned at her. "I hope you didn't leave the circuits open, honey," he said. "You know the Hokas aren't supposed to have contact with anything too modern at this stage of their development."

"I locked it on that one channel," she reassured him. "They can only get the children's programs."

Jones sighed with relief and went out and wheeled in the video. The Hokas were just too blinking inventive, among their other faults. He wished Earth Headquarters hadn't been so quick about allowing them limited trade rights. A few unscrupulous traders could start furnishing them with stuff they shouldn't get for the next twenty years.

He tuned the video to Earth Headquarters and sat through an hour of official bulletins. But there was nothing of importance. Pornia was so far from Earth that a lethargic government couldn't appreciate the real danger. But it was within a few light-years of Toka, and Jones was acutely aware of that fact. This was not the first time he had grumbled about the situation, to his wife or even to some of the Hokas. You'd think the human race's own history would have convinced it that militarism had to be nipped in the bud, but—

He sighed, switched off the set, and yawned. Presently he and Tanni turned out the lights and went to bed.

ALEXANDER JONES was just falling off to sleep when there was a small tap on the window. For a moment, he tried drowsily to ignore

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it, but it came again.

"Hist," whispered a Hokan voice through the opening.

Jones cursed, swiveled his eyes toward Tanni, and saw that she was already asleep. He signaled silence to the round, muzzled face which pressed its damp black nose to the pane. "Just a minute," he murmured. "I'll be right out."

Growling to himself, he dressed clumsily in the dark and went out on the porch. One moon was up, almost full. In its bright glow he could see two tubby Hokas waiting for him. They looked more like big teddy bears, golden-furred, a meter or so tall, than anything else. It took practice before you could tell them apart.

Surprise brought him up short, and his breath hissed between his teeth. Gone were their floppy boots, peaked hats, and bell-covered motley. The two that faced him had adorned their portly bodies with gray tunics, tight whipcord riding breeches, Sam Browne belts, jack-boots, and goggled metal helmets. And holstered by the side of each was a—

"What are you doing with those?" squeaked Jones in panic. His heart tried to climb out of his mouth. "Where'd you get Holman raythrowers?"

They paid no attention. Solemnly, the larger Hoka saluted.

"Coordinator Jones," he said in the English which the natives had adopted, "the expedition is ready."

"What expedition?" cried Jones. "Look here, Buntu—"

"Sir," said the Hoka stiffly, "I am now Captain Jax Bennison of the Space Patrol, at your service." He clicked his heels and saluted again.

"Great jumping rockets!" exclaimed the other Hoka. "Don't tell me the Coordinator didn't recognize you?"

"It's the moonlight, probably," said the first Hoka. "All clear and on green now, Coordinator?"

"I— I—" stammered Jones.

"Aye, aye!" repeated Jax Bennison crisply. "No time to lose, then. We lift grays at 2330 hours. Follow us, sir."

The Hokas set rapidly off and Jones, his brain spinning, hurried after them. He didn't understand one part of this—but if it ever got back to Earth that he had allowed Holman raythrowers to get into the hands of aborigines— His brow beaded with cold sweat at the thought.

The Hokas led the way down narrow, cobbled streets between high-walled houses. The city was quiet, asleep it seemed. But the guards at the wall saluted and opened the gates for them. "Good hunting, Patrolmen," said one.

Outside the city there was a kilometer-wide open field used for the infrequent spaceship landings. In the moonlight, Jones saw that more than a hundred Hokas, uniformed like the two with him, were lined stiffly up at attention. But it was on the large shape behind them that his staggering mind focused.

"My courier ship!" wailed Jones. "What have you done to her?"

The once sleek shape of the *Tanni*

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Girl was now hacked and scarred. Holes had been cut the length of her sides and the muzzles of primitive gunpowder cannon projected beyond the air-seals. Her name had been painted out and the cognomen *Fearless* replaced it; below that were the words *Space Patrol Ship Number One* and a large white star.

Jones made three long strides and caught up with Captain Jax Bennison, who was saluting an elderly Hoka recognizable as a town official. But this one was now dressed in a blue tunic, gold braid, cutlass, and cocked hat. "What's the idea?" barked Jones hysterically. "My ship—"

Solemnly, Jax pointed to the ornate shield with the legend *Space Patrol* that he wore on his breast.

"Sorry, sir," he said, "but you know the rights of the Patrol. Patrolmen may requisition whatever is needed just by showing their badge."

"Who said so?" raged Jones.

"Tom Bracken of the Space Patrol, sir," said Jax. "He says it every day on the video."

Cocked-Hat saluted in his turn. "We knew that you, sir, as Supreme Coordinator, would approve," he said. "Fleet Admiral Ron Bronz at your command, sir."

"The danger is imminent, sir," said the second Hoka. "The Malevonians are preparing their great push, and the fleet seemed to be elsewhere. We could do nothing but organize our own branch of the Patrol to stop the enemy." He clicked his heels. "Executive Officer Lon Meters at your command, sir."

Jones turned wildly to Admiral Ron Bronz. "What are you *doing*?" he spluttered.

"Admiral's inspection before the Patrol leaves," said the old Hoka. His cocked hat slipped down over his snout and he raised it with an irritated gesture. "Damn that tailor. Wouldn't surprise me if he was a Malevonian agent." His voice barked out over the waiting ranks of teddy bears. "Ten-SHUN! Inspection will proceed."

Solemnly, he and Captain Jax went down the lines, touching the nose of each spaceman to see that it was cold and moist. Jones clutched his reeling head and groaned.

"All in good health, sir," said the admiral as he returned. "All clear and on green." His cocked hat slipped down again. Jones found it strangely disconcerting to be addressing now a face and now a hat.

"But— but— but—" stammered Jones.

Lon Meters leaned over and said to Jax Bennison in a clearly audible whisper: "Something wrong with the Coordinator, Captain? You suppose the Malevonians have gotten control of his mind?"

"Of course not," said Jax. "They wouldn't dare. It's just his crusty way. He has a rough exterior but a heart of gold."

Admiral Bronz turned to Jones. "Well, sir, the men are ready," he said. "Would you make a brief but touching speech before they take off?"

A hundred furry faces turned expectantly to Jones where he stood in

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the moonlight. He raised a shaky voice: "This nonsense has got to stop!"

"That's right, sir," beamed Captain Jax. "We've got to stop the enemy."

"Go home to your wives and families!" screamed Jones, trying to rouse a sense of domestic duty. "Go home to your fireside brides!"

"Aye," shrilled the admiral. "When peace has come to the Galaxy, we shall return to our homes."

"You've got your own work to do —" pleaded Jones.

"Aye! Aye!" The squeaky cheers seemed to shake the city walls. "We've got to stop the foe!"

"Form ranks!" barked Captain Jax. "Forward march!"

A hundred Hokas faced the ship and tramped toward its air-lock. A hundred voices lifted under the stars in song.

"Off we go, into the vacuum yonder,
climbing high, into the black,
shaking out evil with fire and thunder,
blasting down to the attack!
All the worlds watch us in wonder
till our mission is done.
We'll ride on high throughout the sky,
for nothing can stop Patrol Ship Number One!"

"Wonderfully well you encouraged them, sir," said the admiral.

"Stop!" screamed Jones. He raced after the marching Hokas, trying to halt the tide.

"The Coordinator!" yelled Lon Meters in a burst of happiness. "The Coordinator himself is going with us!"

Before Jones could catch his breath, he was caught up in the onward sweep. The press of a hundred solid bodies carried him into the ship and up to the bridge. He heard the airlock clang shut behind him. Even though the Hokas were smaller than humans, the courier ship was crowded.

Captain Jax strapped himself into the pilot chair while Jones was still gibbering. "Ready to blast," called a voice from the intercom. The engines growled.

"Ready to blast," echoed Captain Jax.

"Stop!" shrieked Jones, recognizing in panic what was about to happen. "Stop, I say!"

Nobody heard him. Captain Jax pulled the drive switch. Since Jones was not strapped in, the sudden weight threw him back against the bulkhead and smashed him into unconsciousness.

"ARE you all right, sir?"

Fuzzily, with ringing head, Jones struggled back to awareness. Blearily looking about him, he saw that he was alone on the bridge with Jax and Lon. They were bending anxiously over him.

"Here," said Jax, extending a flask. "Have a pull of Old Spaceman."

No matter what name it went under, the Hoka liquor was potent stuff. Jones gulped the liquid fire down and felt a measure of strength return to him.

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"Sorry, sir," apologized the exec, Lon. "We didn't realize you were unprepared for takeoff."

"Where are we?" mumbled Jones.

"Sir," replied the captain solemnly, "we don't know. After we went through the space warp, we lost orientation."

"Huh?" said Jones. "Went through the what?"

"The space warp, sir," explained Lon Meters.

"Oh," said Jones. For a moment the solemnity of the little Hoka was so convincing that he found himself wondering if the four years of astrogation courses he had taken had not perhaps been negligent in not mentioning this phenomenon.

"Well, then," said Captain Jax blandly, "you realize that we must be in a totally unfamiliar part of space. Maybe even in another universe. Observe." He pointed to the viewscreen and the black, starry sky it showed. Jones goggled. Some of the constellations had certainly changed, though not much.

The human's brain began to function once more; he could almost feel it sweating. Video programs never mentioned the intensive mathematical work needed for astrogation, so the Hokas must have assumed that you simply aimed your spaceship where you wanted it to go. Finding themselves unable to locate their position, they had leaped to the conclusion that a space warp—whatever *that* might be—had thrown them off course.

In fact, once they began taking the Tom Bracken program literally, everything else followed with a relentless kind of logic. The Pornian menace — they must have equated that with these Malevonians who, not content with mere rearmament, were apparently out to conquer the universe. They must have decided that the ostensible human plenipotentiary was really the Supreme Coordinator of the Space Patrol in some clever disguise. Then they went ahead and organized their own unit and — and—

Oh, no!

"Where were we going?" he asked.

"Sir?" said Lon Meters.

"Top secret," snapped Captain Jax quickly. "Exec Meters, close your eyes and put your hands over your ears." The other complied.

"We thought this Pornia, sir," said the captain then. "It seems to be the local center of enemy operations. But now that we're lost—"

"Well—" Jones was slowly recovering his equilibrium. "Never mind. We're first going to have to figure out just where we are."

"That's what I thought we were going to have to do," said Captain Jax. "Exec Meters, you can open your eyes and ears. Do you think you can do it, sir?"

A vision of the paper work involved in that little chore floated through Jones' head. As if it didn't ache enough already! "I think so," he groaned.

"Excellent, Coordinator," said Captain Jax. "You take over the chart room, and meanwhile the rest of us

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will maneuver the ship around and look for enemies."

"Oh, no," said Jones dismally. But there didn't seem to be much he could do about it; and even at translight velocities, interstellar space is so big that their chances of barging into a star or planet were negligible.

"Of course," said Captain Jax, "the Malevonians may be any place. Maybe we are in the heart of their stronghold even now. If—"

He was interrupted by an aged Hoka in an acid-stained white smock who came indignantly into the bridge. "Sir," he squeaked, "you've got to do something about that chief engineer."

"Do what?" asked the captain innocently.

"How should I know?" cried the newcomer, dancing with rage and shaking his fists. "Feed him to the bems. Make him walk the plank. Squash him. Anything, just so he'll quit bothering me!"

"I don't believe you've met this man, sir," whispered Lon Meters to Jones. "That's Dr. Zarbovsky, the Patrol scientist. He's quite mad, of course—but a genius."

"But if he's mad," said Jones feebly, "then why—"

"Every Patrol ship has a mad scientist, sir, as you well know," said Lon firmly. "Tom Bracken's does."

"How can I build a new-type disintegrator if the engineer won't let me have the busbars from the drive unit?" screamed Dr. Zarbovsky. "Answer me that!"

Jones stepped into the breach. "There should be extra busbars in the storeroom," he said diplomatically.

"In the storeroom," murmured Dr. Zarbovsky. "I never thought of that!" He hurried out again.

Jax and Lon looked awestruck at Jones. "What a brain!" murmured the exec.

"He wouldn't be Coordinator if he didn't have one," said Jax proudly.

"I wonder," whispered Lon, "I wonder if he's a mutant?"

"I'm getting out of here!" snarled Jones. He slammed the door behind him. The two Hoka officers looked affectionately in his direction.

"A crusty exterior," said Lon, "but a heart of gold. Eh, Jax?"

"On green, Lon," agreed the captain.

FOR the fortieth time, Jones' cup of coffee leaped into the air and splashed on the floor with the ship's sudden change of direction. Bleary-eyed from forty-eight hours with little sleep, the man slammed his stylus down on the latest sheet of calculations and started to get up.

A burry voice snarled over the intercom: "Engine rroom to brridge. Chief Engineerr MacTavish speakin'. Wha' the hell d'ye think ye're doing?" Can ye no keep the ship on a level coorse forr five minutes strraight?"

"Sorry, Angus," replied Captain Jax soothingly. "We're dodging invisible space torpedoes."

Jones slumped back over the chartroom desk, burying his face in his hands.

"Oh, no," he moaned. "Oh, no, no,

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no, no, no."

He lit a cigaret with trembling fingers, thinking that this mad ride would soon be over. *Be brave, Alec,* he told himself, *be brave. Just a few more hours.*

It had not been too hard to locate the ship in space and calculate the path to Pornia's sun. Now they were inside the Pornian System, moving at sublight speed and approaching the natives' home planet. The Hokas had naturally been enthusiastically in favor of going there to do battle.

Well, they'd land, and then he'd turn them over to the Pornians who, possessing a military force, could arrest them and return them to Toka. It was a dirty trick for him to play on his little friends, but the only thing to do. You just couldn't allow this shipful of lunatics to go batting around the Galaxy.

An obbligato of Hoka voices filtered to him over the intercom from the bridge.

"Rough section of space, this, captain."

"Space is like that, Lon. If the space tides don't get you, the radiation madness does. You dodge a meteor only to find yourself trapped in a Sargasso of deadly space weed. And if you manage to battle your way out of that by some miracle, you emerge to find yourself blasting on all jets straight into the middle of the Malevonian fleet."

Jones closed his ears and hung on to the coffee-stained calculation sheets—the figures needed to land on Pornia. He thought bitterly that there might be a cupful of cosmic dust between them and the next star, but that was all which could be expected. Luckily the ship was well stocked with fuel . . .

"Then there's pirates—"

"Like that one bearing down on us now?"

"Don't get jet-happy, Lon. No pirate would dare attack a Patrol ship."

"Well, if he isn't a pirate, what's he doing with the skull and crossbones painted on his ship?"

"I don't see any skull and crossbones."

"Well, I can't see the skull either, but look at those red bloody crossbones on that white field."

"Great jumping comets, Lon, you're right! Attention, all gun crews! Attention, all gun crews! Stand by for battle!"

Struck by a sudden horrible suspicion, Jones flicked on the chartroom's little viewscreen. Swimming in the void nearby was a long spaceship with a red cross painted large on its side.

"Stop!" roared Jones frantically. "That's a hospital ship!"

He exploded out of the chartroom and whizzed toward the bridge. Halfway there, he tripped over a small white-smocked figure.

"Damn interference!" squeaked Dr. Zarbovsky. "Can't let a mad scientist alone for a minute." Then, recognizing the sprawled form of Jones: "Oh, sorry, sir. I was just coming to see you. Where can I get a one-farad condenser?"

"Go to hell," snarled Jones, picking

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himself up.

"But we don't have a hell on this ship," said Dr. Zarbovsky plaintively.

Jones was already running down the corridor. He burst into the bridge and skidded to a halt before the communications board.

"Do you wish to take over, sir?" asked Jax.

"I sure do," gasped Jones.

His fist danced over the board as he sent a call to the other ship.

The image of a Pornian—two meters tall, snake-limbed, with a flat green face sticking out of a high gold-braided collar—formed on the screen. "What's up?" it demanded in the English of the spaceways. "Who are you?"

"Never mind that," said Jones impolitely. "Let me speak to your captain."

"Who are you?" repeated the Pornian stiffly. "We are the Pornian Navy's hospital ship *Sudbriggan*. Identify yourselves, or else as aliens without passports you are liable to detention."

"Detention?" said Jones blankly. He hadn't realized the arrogance of the militarists had gone that far. "You're kidding!"

The Pornian's face turned chartreuse with anger. "Do you insult me?" he hissed. "You are under arrest. Stand by to be boarded."

Jones had a spine-chilling vision of himself explaining to Earth Headquarters just how he and a hundred Hokas came to be interned by the government of a notoriously touchy planet.

"Never mind," he said. "I was just leaving."

Jumping up from the screen, he stepped over to the control board. He was just about to start the translight drive when a thunderous explosion rocked the *Fearless*. Jones felt himself hurled to the floor, his nose sideswiping a table on the way down.

He got up, wiping blood from his face, and glared at Captain Jax. "What happened?" he yelled.

"Why, we opened fire," said the Hoka, pointing to the viewscreen. It showed a portion of the *Fearless'* exterior as well as the open sky. Smoke was curling into space from the cannon mouths. "We didn't get the pirate Malevonian, though," he added regretfully. "His force shield must already have been up."

Nobody had yet invented a force shield. Jones took another horrified look at the Pornian ship. It was taking off sunward at full acceleration. The clumsy solid cannon-balls had done no more than scratch its armored hull, but the captain had evidently had the fright of his life. The image of an Earth Headquarters Colonial Board was replaced in Jones' unhappy mind by the picture of an Interbeing League courtroom and one Alexander Jones on trial for armed assault. Since space piracy, being utterly impractical, had never occurred, the old laws about hanging pirates were probably still on the books.

Out of the welter of thoughts there was only one that emerged with any clarity. And that was to catch the

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Pornian before he could report what had happened, explain, and apologize.

"Full thrust ahead!" he roared, leaping to the pilot chair and throwing down the drive switch.

The Hokas whooped with joy.

"Trust us, Coordinator," shouted Captain Jax. "They won't escape!"

—And the *Fearless* took off in pursuit.

THE Lord High Admiral of the Pornian Navy thundered at the shaken, betentacled figure in the screen before him.

"What?" he bellowed.

"Help! Help!" cried the figure. "Hospital ship *Sudbriggan* reporting. There's a Space Patrol ship after me!"

"A what?" cried the Lord High Admiral.

"Space Patrol Ship Number One," choked the figure. It added breathlessly: "They've got a secret weapon."

"What do you mean, Space Patrol ship?" roared the Admiral. "There's no such thing as a Space Patrol."

"There is too!" shrieked the *Sudbriggan's* captain. The Pornian Navy had not been in existence long enough to become well grounded in military courtesy. "And it's gaining."

Ferociously, the Lord High Admiral punched a button. The communications center of the huge dreadnaught answered him.

"Give me a long-range tracer," barked the Admiral. "Find out what's behind this idiot."

Communications Center obliged.

"FEARLESS calling *Sudbriggan*," gasped Alexander Jones into the unresponsive screen. "Come in, *Sudbriggan*. *Please* come in, *Sudbriggan!*"

The screen flickered to life with the terrified image of a Pornian who must be the hospital ship's exec. He was waving his eye-stalks, too agitated to find English words.

"Get me your captain," cried Jones. "I want your captain."

"N-n-no," stammered the officer. "We shall defend our captain to the l-last enlisted man."

"Then your Admiral," groaned Jones. His contorted face looked more ferocious than he knew. "I must see your Admiral right away. This business has got to stop!"

"Eek," said the officer.

"I'm doing my best," pleaded Jones, "but if you don't get me through to your Admiral I can't answer for the consequences."

The Pornian paled at this bloodthirsty threat and switched off the screen.

"Hey!" shouted Jones. "Come back there!"

"Never mind, Coordinator," said Captain Jax. "We're overhauling him."

The *Sudbriggan* was a glinting speck, lost among the stars, but a glance at the radar tracker told Jones that the courier boat was, indeed, gaining on the slower hospital ship. He mopped his brow in some relief. His chance of catching the other craft before its captain could reach his base and file a damaging report seemed

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pretty good after all. He began turning over in his mind the form his apology would take.

He had assumed that the *Sudbriggan* had taken off in a random sunward direction, and had no idea that the backbone of the Pornian Navy was close at hand. Consequently, the dreadnaught took him completely by surprise.

One minute the viewscreen seemed empty except for the stars. Then all at once, looming up and growing with horrible speed, was the titanic figure of the space battleship, gun turrets glimmering ominously in the light of the distant sun.

"WHAT is this farce?" demanded the Lord High Admiral angrily, looking at the boat in his tracer screen and the legend *Space Patrol Ship Number One* lettered on its bow. What was it, and why was so minute a thing hurling itself so viciously on the great, the invincible super-dreadnaught?"

He twined his tentacled hands thoughtfully. Something occurred to him. What was it the captain of the *Sudbriggan* had said?

Secret weapon!

"Fire guns!" roared the suddenly panic-stricken Admiral, clutching the ship's announcer. "Fire torpedoes! Fire one, fire two, fire three! Fire everything! Shoot that ship down before it hits us!"

Gun crews who have looked on their drills as a sort of pleasant exercise, are not at their best when suddenly ordered without even the preamble of a battle alert to fire their weapons. Such an unexpected order breeds a certain amount of confusion. Nevertheless, they did their best.

Atomic explosions began to blossom about the hurtling *Fearless*, but in airless space a shell has to make a direct hit to do any significant damage. Great space torpedoes leaped out toward the enemy, each as big as the courier boat itself.

Now this was unfortunate. The torpedoes were equipped with the latest tracking devices to find their own targets. But preventive circuits had been installed to keep them from homing on each other. Thus when they reached the *Fearless* and matched velocities and accelerations, they didn't know what to do. They trailed undecidedly in the wake of the Hoka ship, their computers clicking madly. One computer must have gone insane, for that torpedo blew itself up. The rest moved hesitantly toward their own ship.

The Admiral shivered in his quarters, gripping the arms of his chair and praying for a hit and regretting the day he had ever let the Racialist Party leaders talk him into figureheading the Navy. His wife had warned him against it and his wife always knew best. It was all very well strutting around in gold braid; but he might have suspected there would be a catch to it. And sure enough, there was.

He might have known there was a real Space Patrol. He might have known a bloodthirsty race like the humans wouldn't really let a peaceful

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world like his own get away with a little rearming.

"Please," prayed the Admiral, rolling his eye-stalks toward the ceiling of his cabin. "Please—a direct hit. Just one."

"But I only want to apologize!" yelled Jones into the blank communicator screen, holding frantically onto the board while the *Fearless* rocked to the nearby explosions. *"Sudbriggan.* Dreadnaught. Anybody. It's all a mistake. I just want to apologize, dammit!"

"What's the old man up to?" Lon Meters asked Captain Jax as they both clung to their pilot chairs.

"I can't tell you," replied the captain with a knowing wink. "But I'll give you this much of a hint. Underneath that bluff exterior, the Coordinator's mighty shrewd. *Mighty* shrewd."

"Oh," said the exec. They nodded understandingly together.

ALL good things must come to an end; and the famous Space Patrol-Pornian battle was no exception. Aboard the enormous ship they opened a safety port to admit the fleeing *Sudbriggan.* It flashed inside, but before they could close the port again, the *Fearless* had also entered.

If it had not been for the fantastic safety devices inside the dreadnaught, the episode would have ended then and there; but as it was, the absorber fields channeled the terrific kinetic energy of the two vessels into the dreadnaught's accumulators, and they lay inert in the monster ship's bowels. The port clanged to behind them.

The torpedoes decelerated as their circuits informed them that they were almost on their own craft. They milled about in space, their computers gibbering. One torpedo, perhaps equipped with a better-than-average "brain," went up and sniffed at the safety port, wagging its tail rather wistfully.

The *Sudbriggan* had been the first to enter and it was her crew that went boiling out of her airlock and scrambling for the safety of the dreadnaught's interior. A few minutes later, Alexander Jones opened the lock of the *Fearless* and stuck his nose out, only to jerk it hastily back as a raybeam shot past it and splattered against the Patrol ship's side.

This was too much. After being shanghaied, kept up for two nights to make calculations that weren't needed, threatened with internment, and shot at, Jones finally lost his temper. He went storming back into the bridge.

"Give me a raythrower!" he roared.

"Hadn't you better get into a suit first, sir?" asked Lon Meters.

Jones did a double take. All along the main corridor, he could see that the Hokas were scrambling into things that looked like a cross between a spacesuit and a medieval set of armor. The exec was holding out one tailored more nearly to human proportions.

"What?" stammered Jones.

"Space armor, sir," said Captain Jax proudly. "We used the ship's

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tools and made it out of the spare meteor plating in the hold."

Jones goggled. The work in fashioning the suits must have been heartbreaking. Even given the ship's machine tools, the collapsed steel of the meteor plating was almost unworkable. For a second he wavered between admiration and a desire to blow his top at this new outrage on his property. Then he remembered the near-singe his nose had taken, and climbed into the armor without a word.

"Battle ax," said Captain Jax.

"Battle ax," repeated the exec, handing a wicked-looking double-bitted weapon to Jones.

"Raythrower," said the captain.

"Raythrower," repeated the exec.

Jones grabbed the Holman with his first real enthusiasm since this trip began. A smile was forming on his lips when he realized that the weapon was entirely too heavy to be what it appeared to be.

He inspected it. "What's this?" he demanded.

"The raythrower, sir?" asked Captain Jax, looking a little crestfallen. "We had some trouble with them, Coordinator. We sent off our boxtops according to orders over the video, but when we got them, they wouldn't shoot."

"Sabotage," supplied Lon Meters.

"Exactly," said the captain. "So we fixed them up to fire regular bullets like the Western shooting irons. You see—"

He pressed the firing button on his imitation Holman, and a bullet whanged off the low ceiling of the bridge, causing Jones to duck apprehensively. He straightened up, groaned as he looked at the clumsy weapon, and then, with a sigh, holstered it and clumped his way toward the airlock. At least the armor would protect him till he could get to some officer in the dreadnaught and explain the case.

BUT his last feeble intentions of legality were destroyed when he led his Hokas into the first corridor branching from the entry port. A barrage of rays from behind a hastily erected barricade of office furniture made his armor glow and sparkle where they touched, and he tingled with the shock of secondary radiation. Plainly, the aliens weren't going to give him a chance to parley.

"That's enough!" he roared in a rage, his voice coming weirdly from the air holes in the top of his helmet. "Let's clean up the whole blinking ship!"

And he charged forward like a miniature tank, using the sheer mass of his armor to scatter the furniture in the barricade and send the defenders scooting before him in terror.

"The old man's finally got his dander up," said the exec to the captain.

"Yep," answered Jax solemnly. "That he has. But let me tell you something, boy. Under that dande there's a heart of pure, eighteen-cara solid gold!"

THE true story of the cleaning u of the Pornian dreadnaught wi

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never be adequately told, for words are insufficient to describe it.

For two hundred years, no civilized entity had known organized violence. On top of this fact was the one that the advanced military minds who designed the Pornian dreadnaught would have tut-tutted in horror if they had been asked how the crew of the ship was to defend it against a boarding party. With icy politeness they would have pointed out that boarding went out with wooden ships, and that no enemy vessel could approach within three thousand kilometers of the giant without being destroyed. Thus few of the crew had hand guns, and fewer still knew how to use them. So everywhere through the huge ship could be seen panic-stricken herds of tall Pornians fleeing in panic before one or two small armored figures. It was like a host of Frankenstein dolls let loose in an enormous home for old ladies. Such of the crew of the dreadnaught as was not attacked—and after all, a hundred Hokas could reach only a fraction of the total acreage inside—stayed by its posts, shivering in fear and hoping there would be no orders to counter-attack.

To be sure, there was one center of resistance. When the news reached the Admiral that the crew of the Space Patrol boat had effected an entrance, he gathered his personal staff around him on the bridge and determined to die fighting. His followers unlimbered a mobile disintegrator, trained it on the entrance, and waited.

Meteor plating is good armor against handguns. But it is about as useful as wet cardboard against the full power of a mobile disintegrator. Jones, leading a dozen Hokas around a bend in the corridor, came full upon the bridge entrance. The gun crew let off a panicky, ill-timed bolt which tore a hole through three floors above. Jones beat a hasty retreat, struggling to restrain his Hokas, who were all for rushing the gun.

"Look," he said grimly, when he finally had them settled down, "are Jax and Lon here?"

"Here, Coordinator."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Well, look," said Jones. "That mobile unit isn't like the handguns—that is to say, it doesn't have a self-contained power source. It gets its energy from a cable run directly to the ship's generators. They taught us that in our history classes on the last interstellar war. Now, what I want you to do is hunt around for the central power control room—it ought to be on this level—and pull every switch you find there. One of them should shut off the power to that mobile."

The two little armored figures nodded their anonymous heads and toddled off down the corridor. Jones and the rest sat down to wait.

"MIGHTY smart, the old man," said Lon Meters as they trudged along. "Imagine his knowing the way the Malevonian ships are put together."

"There isn't much that goes on in the universe that the Coordinator of

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the Space Patrol doesn't know," replied Jax Bennison complacently. "Why, I imagine nobody will ever know how many spy rays the old man has in places, and how many undercover agents at work."

"Lonely life, though," said Lon sadly. "Can't trust anyone, the old man can't. The responsibility for the safety of all civilization rests on his shoulders." He paused, then went on: "Which of us do you think he's picked to take his place when his time comes?"

They had, by now, explored up and down several halls and looked into a number of luxurious apartments for the top officers of the dreadnaught. Now they came to a small door with a sign stenciled on it in the spatial English:

DANGER
DO NOT ENTER

"A-ha," said Lon.

"This'll be it," said Jax. He swung his battle ax at the lock, and the door — being unlocked — bounced open. They stepped inside.

"Yep," said Captain Jax, looking about him with satisfaction at the ranked masses of levers and switches. "This is it, all right. Executive Meters, you take that side and I'll take this."

They started yanking levers.

COUGHING, choking, sneezing, and gurgling, the Lord High Admiral of the Pornian Navy sloshed his way forward to surrender.

"My sword, sir," he said with what dignity he could summon up.

Alexander Jones accepted it.

"The ship, sir, is yours," coughed the Admiral. Then his official manner broke down. "But if turning on the fire extinguisher sprinklers, the fumigation system, the leak-detector smoke system, and directing the sewers into the deck-flushing system isn't a dirty way to fight, I'd like to know what is."

Jones ignored his resentment.

"The terms for your surrender are these," he said sternly.

"Yes, sir," said the Admiral meekly.

"You will dismantle this dreadnaught and not build any more."

"Yes, sir," said the Admiral. "I, for one, will be glad to get back to civilian life—"

"You will disband the navy."

"Glad to, sir."

"You will inform Earth Headquarters of your decisions in these matters, but will not specify the reasons of mention this battle. That is classified information."

"Yes, sir."

"And you will inform the Racialist Party on Pornia that the Space Patrol, which owes allegiance to no race or system, but is dedicated to the upholding of law and order throughout the Galaxy, takes a dim view of their share in the government and demands another planet-wide election wherein other Pornian parties will be given a fair chance to run for office."

The Admiral gulped.

"Well— I—yes, sir, I guess I can do that. Under the circumstances.

"Okay, fine," said Jones. Signalling the armored figures around him to fol-

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low, he turned on his heel and went back toward the entry port.

WHEN the *Fearless* was finally settled down to her return trip, Jones called the Hokas together and, speaking over the intercom, addressed them all.

"Gentlemen of the Space Patrol," he said crisply, "well done! But now I must inform you that there will be no more expeditions of the Patrol for some time."

"None?" asked Captain Jax wistfully.

"None," said Jones, tossing the keys to the control board in one hand and clamping firmly on to them as they landed back in his palm. "The Space Patrol is being disbanded as of now until such time as another threat to the Galaxy brings us forth to scour the evildoer from the stars and the space between the stars."

There was a moment's sad silence, then the exec, Lon Meters, spoke up.

"But what's going to become of you, sir?" he asked sympathetically.

"That," said Jones, unable to disguise a slight quaver in his voice, "is what I am just about to find out."

He waved bravely to the assembled Hoka officers and dismissed them from the bridge and shut the door on them. The new long-range subspace transceiver which the dreadnaught's technicians had installed for him glowed as his trembling fingers put in a call.

True, the Interbeing League, and Earth Headquarters in particular, wouldn't be inquiring too closely into the Pornians' sudden change of heart. They'd be too glad to have a potential menace removed with no cost or effort to them. But—

The figure of Tanni appeared on the screen. Her arms folded implacably as she recognized him.

"Well," she said ominously, "and just where have you been?"

Weakly, Alexander Jones started to explain.

THE 11TH WORLD SCIENCE-FICTION CONVENTION

Time: Sept. 5-6-7, 1953 (Labor Day weekend). Place: Bellevue Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia, Pa. Program; banquet; costume ball; fans & fans. Guest of Honor: Willy Ley. Membership: $1. Send to: 11th World S-F Con, P.O. Box 2019, Philadelphia 3, Pa.

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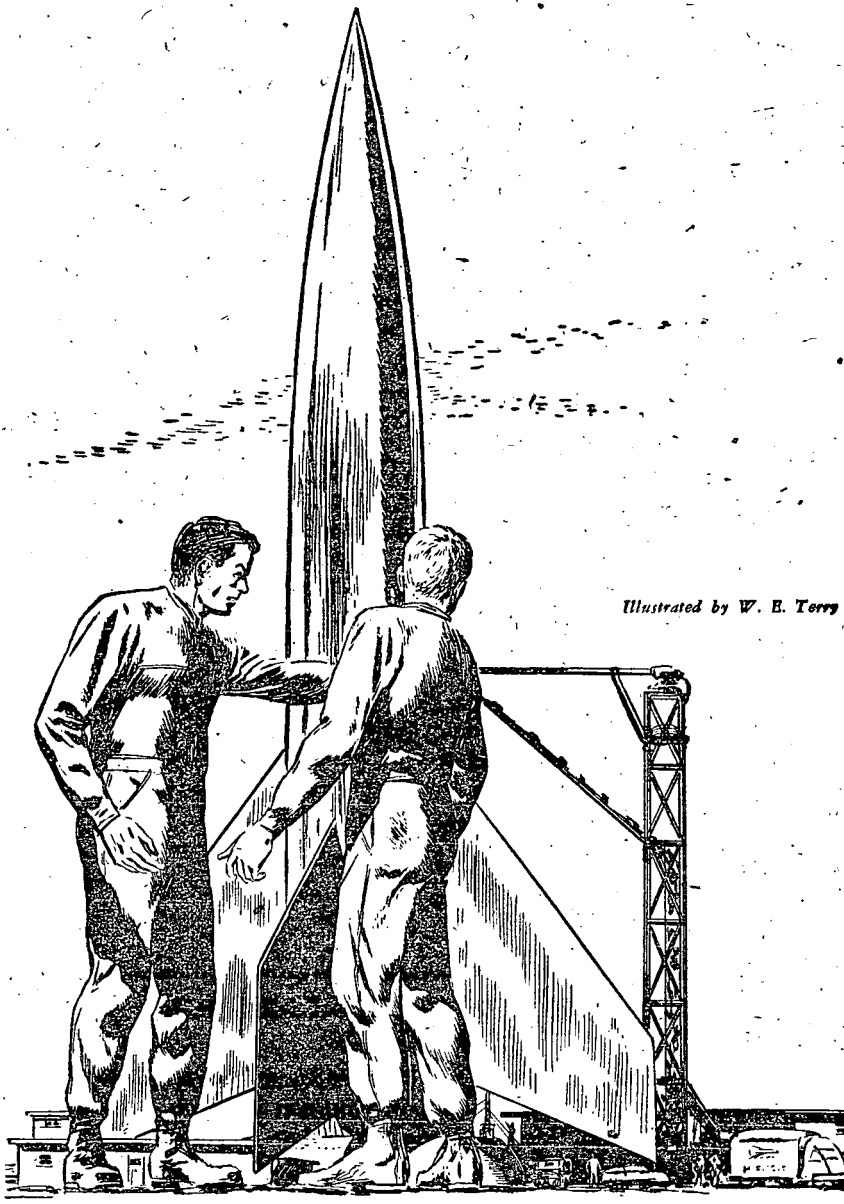

Illustrated by W. E. Terry

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Pete Harrison carried caution to an extreme, and bet only on "sure things." But now he was a member of the first expedition to the moon and it looked as if he'd have to take his chances along with the rest of the crew. Unless he could find a copy of

YESTERDAY'S PAPER

By Boyd Ellanby

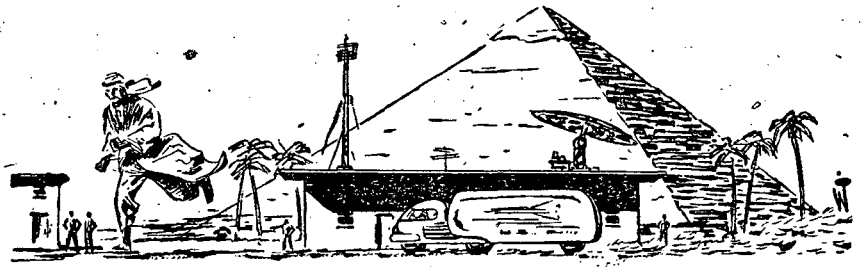
FROM the direction of the *Tycho's* berth, Bill Danforth rolled up in his jeep and grinned at Peter Harrison's worried face.

"What's the matter, Pete," he said, "still trying to figure our chances to six decimals? That doesn't pay, in business like ours."

Peter Harrison looked at the moon just rising behind the Pyramids. "That's just what does pay, in business like ours. You figure your chances, as close as you can."

"Sure. But when you've done that, why keep worrying? We'll never know the score any closer than we do now—until we get back. Better let me run you down to the Semiramis for a drink."

Peter shook his head. "Thanks. But I'm not in a drinking mood, now." He scuffed his boot in the sand while he stared across the desert and brooded on the rocket ship waiting



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there in the dusk. "Call me anything you like, except a fool," he said. "I'm not trying to back out on the deal. I knew what I was in for when I signed up, months ago, but I had supposed the job would look more certain, this close to take-off time. When the *Tycho* lifts for the moon, I go with it, but it's not only the conservatives who are wondering if the ship will ever get back. Even the big gamblers are getting cold feet, and last night when I walked up Kasr el Nil, I couldn't go half a block without some laddie in a nightgown stepping up and offering me sixty to forty that the *Tycho* will never get back."

"So what?" said Bill. "Do you think the U.N. would have set up a project on this scale, gone to the enormous trouble of getting permission from the Egyptian Government to make this installation smack in the middle of the desert, half-way from nowhere, if they thought the jump would fail? Would they have spent millions to build the Hyperphysics Institute, to erect the Moonport, and to import thousands of specialists, just for a whim?"

"I know, I know! But I want to feel certain — absolutely certain — that I've checked every possibility of things going wrong. Be serious, Bill. What do you think the chances are of the *Tycho's* getting us to the moon and back again, safely?"

Bill shrugged his shoulders. "What do you think I am, a fortune-teller? Maybe you should ask Jim Dutton or one of his boys over at Temporal Research to peek into the future for you."

"I'm not kidding! I just want to figure probabilities."

"But we've already figured probabilities, till those computers inside are leaking probabilities at the seams! There are four of us making the trip on the *Tycho*—you, me, Carl Johansson, and Pete Harriman—though how they came to foul things up by choosing two guys with names so much alike, is beyond me. Out of the four of us, what makes you so special? Pete Harriman and Carl Johansson seem able to take the risk in their stride, just like me. Yet they've both got wives, which you and I haven't, and Carl even has a kid. I heard you were the worrying kind before we signed up for this deal, but I never guessed you'd take it so hard. Are you always like this?"

A hail came across the rocky plateau.

"Ya Pasha! Ya Pasha!"

They turned to see a running Arab, his bare feet slapping noiselessly over the sand, the skirts of his blue and white *galabiya* streaming behind him as he ran.

Out of breath, he reached the jeep and gasped, "Ya Pasha Harriman!"

"Wrong man," said Peter. "I'm Harrison, not Harriman, and I wish you wouldn't keep calling me Pasha. In America we don't have any nobility, remember, and plain Colonel is good enough for me."

"Okay, Pasha Harriman."

Peter sighed. "I've told you a hundred times, Abdou, I'm Harri-*son*. It's the bald-headed flyer that's Harri-

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man. They call him hairy-man, because he hasn't got any hair. Is that clear?"

Bill Danforth chuckled, as he spoke to the puzzled Arab. "He's just trying to confuse you, Abdou. Don't pay any attention. All you have to do is remember: red hair equals Harri*son*."

"Excuse me, ya Pasha," said Abdou. "My ears do not hear the difference well, and so it is hard to remember. But the young lady at the Hyperphysics Institute, the one at the communications office, sent me to get you. The man with red hair who is going to the moon, she said. There's a radiophone call for you, from America."

"Who's calling me?"

"That's not for me to say, sir. I think it is another young lady."

"Oh, no!" said Peter, his forehead creased in a frown. "I wonder if it can be Ruth?"

"I wouldn't know," said Bill. "Who's Ruth?"

"A girl I know. I wonder if something's happened—"

"Hop in the jeep," said Bill. "You too, Abdou. Crawl in the back and we'll give you a lift."

IN the club lounge of the Hyperphysics Institute, Peter sat on the edge of his air-cushioned chair, radiophone in hand, listening to the appalling jumble of sounds beamed into his ear.

"No!" he shouted. "I was not calling the chief Lamasery in Tibet. I'm trying to get a call from America."

A white robed waiter, resplendent in scarlet tarbush, scarlet sash, and scarlet sandals, hurried up to place a frosted glass on the table before him, then padded away.

Ignoring the glass, Peter gripped the phone more tightly as he cried out, "Ruth! Then it was you! I can't hear you very well, Ruth. No, operator, this is not the Addis Ababa airport, I'm trying to talk to Chicago. What's that, Ruth? Yes, the takeoff is less than a month away, now, and as soon as we get back I'll phone you, and you can send out the invitations. What's that? You're coming *here*?"

The warm voice rose and fell in his ear as though it were bobbing on the waves of the sea.

"The family seems to want a vacation," she said. "We're rocketing to London, and flying on to Cairo. We'll arrive two weeks from today, and you can make arrangements at the Embassy for us to be married there, the evening we arrive."

"But Ruth!" he protested, "we can't take the chance. I've already explained all this to you."

"I know you have, Pete. You've been explaining for nearly five years, now. First we couldn't get married because you hadn't finished your doctorate. Then we had to wait because it wasn't enough for you to be a physicist, you had to know rocket theory too. Then you put it off because it wasn't a hundred per cent certain that you'd survive the first transatlantic rocket flight. Well, you survived, just as I said you would. But did we get married? No, you

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asked me to wait until you'd completed the organization of the Thorium plant, because it might blow up and take you with it, along with the state of Nebraska. And now you want to wait until you've got back from the moon. Right?"

"Right," said Peter, in a small voice.

"I'm not a toy, to be kept on the shelf forever, Peter. I've got pioneer blood in my veins, and I'm just as ready to share the risk of the future with my man as my great-great-great grandmother was when she sat beside by grandfather in a covered wagon, and crossed the middlewestern prairies in the dead of winter. No, Pete, this is your last chance. You make arrangements for our wedding to take place at the Embassy, two weeks from tonight, or else the wedding just isn't going to take place, ever."

Peter reached for his misted glass and gulped down half the drink.

"Be reasonable, Ruth! What would happen to you if I don't come back from the moon? Get off the line, operator! I don't understand Italian."

Ruth's gentle voice came clearly. "You can waste a lifetime, being reasonable. If I'm willing to take a chance, Pete, why shouldn't you be? Is it a deal?"

He wiped his streaming forehead, and said weakly, "All right, darling. It's a deal. Two weeks from tonight."

The phone clicked off, and he replaced the set in its cradle in the arm of his chair. He drained the rest of his drink and sank back into the cushions. Glaring distractedly around the crowded lounge, he wondered if there was anyone around, who could give him good advice right now?

Carl Johansson, he supposed, was having a family dinner at home, in the suburb of Maadi. Bill Danforth had gone into Cairo, to take in a new night club. He noticed Peter Harriman making for the ping pong room, his bald head gleaming under the lights—but Pete Harriman's wife had gone back to the States, and he was soured on matrimony.

A hand clapped him on the shoulder.

"Hi, Pete! You look low."

It was Jim Dutton, head of Temporal Research. He'd known Jim at M.I.T., and had always liked him.

"Well, the fact is," Pete began.

"It can't be that bad, whatever it is," said Jim. "Sorry. I'm meeting the wife for dinner in the Cheops Room, and I'm late. Tempestuous Tessie kept me overtime tonight." He hurried away.

The crowd in the lounge was thinning, now, as people went in to dinner. Peter sat up and clapped his hands sharply together. When the waiter came running, he snapped an order.

"Another Moon Fizz."

"Haadir!" said the waiter, and padded away.

FOUR Moon Fizzes later, Peter wove his way out of the lounge, took the escalator to the ground floor, exhibited his wrist identification to the soldier at the entrance, and emerged into the radiance of night

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in the desert. He looked up, and tried to focus his eyes. The moon was high in the sky, now, and her light was reflected from the white slopes of the Pyramids to the north of him.

He strolled on, aimlessly toward the Hyperphysics Institute, known to its workers as the Labyrinth, because the many cells of its offices and laboratories spread over a full acre of desert. His head was beginning to clear and as he looked at the pattern of lighted windows in the few labs where research went on twenty-four hours a day, he remembered a scrap of conversation.

It was ten days ago, the day of his arrival in Cairo. Abdou, acting as his guide, had been taking him to the gyro-lab. They had passed the open door of a room from which issued a high-pitched, nerve-shattering, mechanical whine, and his skin had crawled with the physical discomfort of that noise.

"What are they doing in there, Abdou?" he had asked.

Abdou smiled, and spread out his hands, palms upwards.

"It is not for me to say, ya Pasha. They say they are learning how to travel into the middle of next week. Perhaps it is a joke?"

Had it been a joke, Peter wondered? But the middle of next week wouldn't do me any good. If only I could travel into the middle of next month, now, and find out for myself whether the *Tycho* will return!

He stopped short near the doorway, and an Egyptian Captain saluted smartly.

"Something wrong, Colonel Harrison? Can I help you?"

"No, thank you, Captain Hussein. I think I'll just take another turn around before I call it a day. Nothing wrong."

He smiled to himself as he wandered on in the moonlight. Nothing wrong at all!

Suddenly, like a jumble of letters suddenly forming themselves into a familiar word, various isolated remarks overheard in the past few days had tied themselves into coherence. He had a flash of conviction that the boys in Temporal Research had indeed learned how to travel into the middle of next week, and a whole plan of action blue-printed itself in his mind.

He still remembered something of the hyperphysics he had studied during his five years at M.I.T., and in their senior year all his class had learned the physical theory underlying the concept of time travel. Since then, he had scarcely thought of the subject, but it was hardly surprising that some practical progress should have been made since he left college. Against Jim Dutton's advice, he remembered, he had by-passed Physics X, the course in the philosophy of time travel, having no patience with such nonsensical questions as "What would you do if you ran into yourself in the street?" When the technic reached perfection, he had always believed, such hypothetical paradoxes would be bound to vanish in the reality.

He returned to the Labyrinth.

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Pausing before the guard at the entrance, he showed his wrist identification and strode in purposefully, and combed the lounge until he located Jim Dutton relaxing with a long cool drink.

"Hi, Jim," he said. "Did you find your wife all right?"

"She's gone on home. One of the youngsters was having an attack of gyppy tummy."

"Too bad. Say, Jim, why do you bother with the drinks they make here? Come on down to Shepheard's with me, and I'll buy you a real, genuine Moon Fizz."

Jim pulled himself to his feet, and yawned. "Can do, I guess. Just a night-cap, though."

"I've been wanting to hear more details of the work in Temporal Research. Is it true that you boys can get as far ahead as the middle of next week?"

"You want to hear about the exploits of Tempestuous Tessie, do you? You underestimate her, Pete. She's got so she can push ahead as far as the middle of next month, and not even breathe hard!"

THE laboratories on corridor J 3 were usually quiet and deserted by seven o'clock each evening, and on five successive nights Peter had managed to slip into the corridor, unobserved, quietly to open the door whose brass plate read *Temporal Research,* and lock the door behind him. With the entrances of the Institute so completely guarded, no unauthorized person could enter the building, but an authorized person, once in, was free to wander where he liked, on the principle that no one would meddle in research that did not concern him.

At first glance, the research had seemed to consist of nothing but paper work, the feeding and milking of the giant computers in the room. But Jim Dutton had allowed himself more than a "night-cap," while discussing the habits of Tempestuous Tessie with his old classmate, and had canvassed the subject in such detail that Peter had no trouble in locating the door concealed in the air-conditioning unit, and entering the softly lighted tunnel which led to an underground room not far from the third Pyramid.

Tempestuous Tessie was located in the ruins of a mastaba, the tomb of one Lord Harakhte, a long forgotten noble, and its stone walls still bore traces of color where paintings had been. Just below the ceiling, at ground level, two modern windows had been installed, about six inches square, not likely to be noticed even if some tourist should wander so far from the conventional tour of the antiquities. One rock wall was covered with a slab of transparent neolucite, studded with numerous dials and rheostats, and the main buss bars were connected to power cables as thick as a man's arm. The opposite wall was overlaid with a complex of circuit diagrams, in engineer's shorthand.

In the center of the room stood Tempestuous Tessie, a plastic chair

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standing in a cube made of the intricate intermeshing of steel and aluminum ribbons.

By his sixth night of work, Peter felt himself ready for his little jump into the middle of next month. He had made his plans with his customary care, and nothing at all, he was certain, could go wrong. It would be as simple as ordering a drink at a bar, and getting it.

The schedule of the *Tycho* called for her to blast off at dawn, on Saturday, February 10. She would land on the moon some seven hours later, her crew of four would spend several days in observation, exploring the surface and recording data, and the rocket would return to its base the following Friday morning, February 16. This first trip was just a trial run, a pilot journey for future research.

After much careful calculation, Peter decided to set the machine to project him to that important Friday at around eleven o'clock in the morning. He would then take a desert taxi to the Moonport, and if he were lucky he might see with his own eyes the landing of the ship. If the *Tycho* arrived before he did, he had only to ask some passer-by the details of the landing, or to read about them in the daily paper.

The power supply of the machine would limit his stay in the future to four hours, and if at the end of that time, by three in the afternoon, the ship had not returned, he would know that some terrible accident had occurred, and that in all probability the ship and its crew would never again reach Earth.

It was all very simple, he thought. Just an hour's glimpse of the future, and he would be able to order his entire life as a sensible man likes to do.

He glanced at his wrist watch. A few minutes before eleven. He checked the settings on the dials. All correct.

He settled back into the chair, closed his eyes, and closed the switch.

HE felt slightly dizzy when he opened his eyes, but as he stepped from the cage a current of cold air from the surface helped to revive him. His watch read just eleven. Quickly he climbed up the narrow ramp, the once secret entrance left centuries ago by the mastaba's builders, and emerged into the desert daylight. Walking quickly down the slope toward the Pyramids, he pushed through the stream of tourists until he reached the crowd of dragomans, waiting near the entrance of the Great Pyramid.

A white-bearded patriarch with cane in hand and ingratiating smile on his face approached him.

"Want a nice camel ride, mister?"

"No, no," said Peter, glancing impatiently at the sky. "Can you tell me if the ship has come back from the moon, yet?"

"Very nice camel, mister. His name is George Washington. He rides easy."

Peter shook off the restraining hand. "No, I want a desert taxi to take me over to the Moonport. I want

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to see the ship when it comes in."

"Too late, mister," said the dragoman. "Ship came in yesterday. You better stop worrying about the moon, and take nice camel ride instead."

"What!" shouted Peter. "Are you sure it came in yesterday?"

"I'm sure, okay. Yesterday no business here. No tourists. Nobody wanted camel rides, everybody watching the ship come back from the moon. Business is very bad, mister. I have many children; and they don't have enough to eat. Give me ten piasters for my family."

"Blast your family," said Peter. "I want to know about the ship. Why did she come back yesterday?"

"Something wrong. Where were you yesterday, not to hear? People all talked about it."

"Never mind where I was yesterday. What went wrong?"

"How should I know? I'm only a poor old man, with many hungry children."

"Did everybody get back safe?"

"God, he knows," said the old man, "but people say that two of the men, Americans, like you, were carried out of the ship on stretchers. And they say that the American government will send the bodies back to America. But only God knows."

Peter was stunned. His heart beat furiously, and he could scarcely form words with his trembling lips.

"Which ones were they?" he gasped. "Who were the men?"

The Arab shrugged his shoulders. "God, he knows," he said. "Why didn't you read about it in the newspapers, or hear it over the radio? I know only that my family went hungry last night."

Digging into his pocket, Peter pulled out a ten-piaster piece and flung it at the outstretched hand. "Here's for your family. Now let me go."

He ran past the row of kneeling camels and paused at the door of a taxi which was just taking in a group of travelling Britons.

"Driver!" he said. "Where's the nearest place to buy a paper?"

The driver scratched his head. "Don't you have a radio? Not many papers any more. Have to go to Groppi's or Shepheard's, maybe."

"We're in a hurry, driver," said the tourist, with a curt stare at Peter.

Turning his back, Peter ran down the steep road that curved to Mena House, dashed through the garden, disturbing a flock of hungry sparrows, and into the lobby where he was met by a brightly dressed doorman.

"Where's your phone? Quickly!"

He gave the number of Carl Johansson's house in Maadi, and waited tensely, listening to the repeated ringing. All I have to do, he thought, is just to ask Carl which ones got back safely.

Then he banged home the receiver as though it had become a hissing snake, and sweat broke out on his forehead, as the doorman watched him curiously.

I can't do that, thought Peter. Good heavens, I can't do that! Maybe Carl was one of those killed. And what would his wife think of me,

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asking an insane, heartless question like that?

Tossing a coin to the doorman, he walked slowly out into the brilliant sunshine. In front of the hotel stood several taxis, and like a man in a dream Peter opened the door of one, crawled in, and settled down on the dilapidated springs of the back seat. No, telephoning Carl's house was too risky. The best thing to do, he decided, would be to go over to Jim Dutton's—the Institute would surely be closed today, out of respect for the victims—and find out why the ship had returned a day early, and which two of the crew had been killed.

"Take me to Maadi."

With a clash of gears, the old-fashioned taxi-cab, vintage 1970, zoomed down the Pyramids road, snaking in and out of the traffic, blowing its horn constantly as it dodged camels and grazed the skirts of yelling little boys. They had gone only a few block when Peter jerked forward and shouted at the driver.

"Stop! Stop right here!"

Brakes screeched, and the car lurched to a stop, nearly knocking over a cart loaded with sugar cane. The driver turned around.

"What's the matter, sir? This is not Maadi."

"I know it, I know it," said Peter. "Just keep quiet and let me think a minute."

The blue-beaded bangle, a charm against the Evil Eye, vibrated against the rear-vision mirror, swinging rhythmically in the light breeze. The regular motion half hypnotized Peter as he watched it, and tried to arrange his thoughts.

I can't possibly go to Jim Dutton's house, he thought. I am an utter fool. What if *I* was one of the men killed? And if I roll up at his front door he'll think I'm a ghost. Or, if I wasn't killed, I might be anywhere at this moment, maybe even sitting in his living room! It would be terrible if there were two of me seen wandering around Cairo.

Or was it possible, his dazed mind wondered, to have two of him going about at the same time? He wished now that he had not skipped that course in the philosophy of time travel, in his senior year. He wished he knew the official verdict on the paradoxes involved. It would make his mind a lot easier now—or would it? He was overwhelmed with a sudden conviction that it was impossible for any one man to be in two places at the same time. Doesn't the fact that I am here and alive, now, he wondered, prove that I was one of those killed on the trip to the moon?

He became conscious of a headache, an intense, throbbing, persistent ache, from nape of neck to forehead, which made clear thinking impossible, and the very effort to think was torture.

"Where to, sir?" said the driver.

With a supreme effort Peter disciplined his thoughts. I've got to keep out of sight, he reflected. Luckily, I don't know so very many people in Cairo, as yet, but I mustn't let myself run into anybody who knows me.

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He glanced at his watch. It was nearly noon, now, and it was not likely that anybody would be in town at this hour, when the sun was at its hottest. The best thing to do was to buy a newspaper.

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver again.

"Take me into town. Isn't there a newsstand right across the street from Shepheard's? Take me there. I want to buy a paper."

"Okay," said the driver, as he started the car rolling. "What's the matter with your radio?"

"Haven't got one."

The driver made a clicking sound with his tongue. "Too bad. Papers aren't so easy to get, these days."

"What do you mean?"

"It's this modern world, with the U.N. settling this research thing here, and all. Nowadays everybody has a radiophone and television, and with news service automatically piped in to every house, there's only a few, what they call conservatives, that like to read the morning paper at breakfast time. When I was a kid, I remember I used to run errands for the bawab, the doorman, at one of the big apartment houses, and I remember I used to lug in at least a dozen different newspapers every morning. You had your pick of maybe three in Arabic, one in Italian, a couple in French, and an English paper, and so on. You could buy one either morning or evening. The way things are now, people don't need them, and there's only two that still come out, one in Arabic and one in English."

Peter tensed. "Morning or evening?"

"Both morning."

Peter sighed, and relaxed. As they paused for a few minutes to let a flock of fat-tailed sheep cross the street, he had a sudden idea.

"Maybe you can tell me what I want to know, driver. I understand the ship got back from the moon, yesterday."

"That's what they say."

"And I heard two of the men were dead when the ship arrived. Is that right?"

"That's what they say."

"What were their names, can you tell me?".

The driver hunched his shoulders. "American names. I never can remember American names, mister, that's why I call everybody 'sir,' even my old customers. All those names sound alike to me."

Peter gave up, and sat back until the taxi pulled up across the street from Shepheard's. He paid off the driver and walked over to the news kiosk.

"Egyptian *Gazette*," he said.

"Last one we got."

MOVING to one side, he hastily searched the columns of the paper. There were only four pages, and it was not until he reached the inner columns of the third page that he came on any reference to the rocket ship. There he found the small heading, YESTERDAY'S TRAGEDY.

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"The sad journey of the *Tycho*, detailed in yesterday's paper," he read, "has grieved the entire community. The King and his Ministers have sent their official condolences to the American Government, and to the U.N. Hyperphysics Institute. Private memorial services for the two unfortunate victims will be held at the America Embassy this morning at eleven."

That was all.

Why had the crew had the diabolical idea of returning a day ahead of schedule, he wondered savagely? The shift in timing had demolished all his careful preparation, and made it impossible for him to find out what he had hoped to find. Yesterday's news was dead. The tempo of modern living had come to mean that an event that happened yesterday was almost as remote from public interest as an event of a hundred years ago.

He crumpled the paper and threw it into the street, then turned back to the newsstand.

"I'd like to buy a copy of yesterday's paper."

The boy in charge looked bewildered. "Yesterday, all gone. Today, there," and he pointed to the crumpled paper lying on the pavement.

"Yes, yes, I know, but I'm through with today, and it just happens that I want to see a copy of *yesterday's* paper. Haven't you got one, tucked under the counter there?"

The boy shook his head, but a calculating look had come into his sharp black eyes.

"You want yesterday's paper?"

"That's right."

"You pay?"

"That's right."

"Okay, I go get you a copy."

"Where can you get it?"

The boy pointed, vaguely. "Over at the office, where they publish it. Over in Kasr el Nil. Be back in five minutes."

Peter hesitated. Should he go himself, he wondered? He glanced at his watch. Twelve-thirty. Only two hours and a half left to him. He was tired, and hungry, and particularly he was thirsty, from wandering about under the baking noon-day sun.

Across the street the shadowed entrance to Shepheard's interior loomed enticingly. Inside, he knew, was the cool quietness of the bar.

"All right," he said, handing over a ten piaster coin. "Go get me a copy of yesterday's paper, and if I'm not here when you get back, wait for me. How long did you say it would take you?"

"Maybe five minutes, mister," said the boy, with a happy grin. Deftly he lowered the protecting metal shield over his meager supply of papers, locked it with a padlock, and ran down the street.

Progress at last! thought Peter, as he dodged across the street, his ears battered by the bedlam of the honking cars, yelling pedestrians, and vociferous camels. He climbed the few steps to the stone veranda of the hotel, and walked toward the shaded arch of the door. Then he stopped, and turned his back.

Standing in the doorway, a sad-

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dened look on his face, stood Jim Dutton, talking with a U.N. official. Peter side-stepped to shelter himself behind a potted palm, and cautiously peered through the leaves. Were they going or coming? Jim had been to the memorial services at the Embassy, he supposed, and had come here for a bracer before going home. The question was, was he leaving now, or was he just on his way to the bar? Standing in the doorway there, talking, he was as effective a barrier as a whole regiment of soldiers.

As the time dragged on, Peter glanced for the hundredth time at his watch. No minutes had ever seemed so long to him. If Jim didn't leave soon, the prospect of a drink would vanish.

Another few minutes of talk, and Jim Dutton and the U.N. official turned, and entered the hotel. They had been arriving, not leaving.

With a sigh of resignation, Peter turned and walked down the steps, and crossed to the newsstand.

No boy. The traffic clattered by. A ragged urchin tugged at his sleeve.

"Buy a chance on the sweepstakes, mister?"

"I never take chances," Peter snapped.

An old man shuffled up, looked around furtively, and offered from the shadow of his flowing sleeve some "very special" postcards. Peter shook his head.

A dragoman in pale green silk offered to guide him to the Bazaars, and Peter turned his back. But all three remained, trying to persuade him to change his mind, until he snarled at them with a vicious "*Imshi!*" and they scattered.

He had waited nearly half an hour and was glaring at his watch when the dragoman sauntered by again, a smirk on his cynical face.

"Are you waiting for somebody, sir?"

"Yes. I'm waiting for the boy that runs this newsstand. I sent him to buy me a copy of yesterday's paper."

"You gave him money?"

"Certainly."

The dragoman pursed his lips. "No need to wait, sir. That boy won't come back today." And he strolled on, twirling his bamboo cane.

He was right. The boy didn't come back.

At a quarter past one, Peter hailed a passing taxi.

"Sharia Kasr el Nil," he said. "Egyptian *Gazette*."

Five minutes later he was clattering up the wooden stairs of an old building, and on the second floor he faced a door labelled Egyptian *Gazette*. The door was closed.

He knocked, but nothing happened. He rattled the door knob, but the door was firmly locked. No sound came from inside.

He shouted. "Hello! Anybody here?"

Presently a bent old man hobbled down the hall, peering at him with half blind eyes.

"Nobody home," he said.

"But I want to get into this office, to see the editor."

"Nobody home."

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"Where are they?"

The old man broke into a flood of Arabic which left Peter's head swimming. He cut in to the meaningless volubility.

"Don't you speak English?"

"*La!* Nobody home."

"And I thought everybody in Cairo could speak English! Where's the editor? Where's the printers? Where is everybody?"

The door of the adjoining office opened and an amiable, swarthy face peered out. "I'm Italian myself, old boy, but I can speak English. Editor's gone to Alex for the week-end. The help are all at church."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you realize this is Friday, old boy? All the help are Mohammedans, and this is their holy day. Like Sunday, old boy. Come back tomorrow. Where have you been living? You ought to know you can't do business on a Friday." With a beaming smile, he slammed his door.

"But all I wanted," Peter shouted desperately, "was to buy a copy of yesterday's paper!"

The door swung open, and the affable Italian looked out. "But nobody keeps yesterday's paper. The day is gone, isn't it?"

"Haven't *you* got a copy, lying around your office?"

"Wouldn't have it cluttering up the place. My servant takes them out and sells them, as soon as I've finished."

"But where does he sell them?"

"Not my business. Maybe to dealers in old newsprint. Maybe somewhere else. You've heard of the world paper shortage, old boy? Where he sells them? Never asked him."

The door slammed shut again, and Peter slouched down the stairs.

WALKING along the street, he was without ideas, without hope, almost without conscious volition. He found himself standing, finally, beside a Bar and Restaurant, and wearily he climbed the stairs to the open-air veranda, where he sank down in a spindly chair at a marble-topped table.

"Beer, sir?"

"A dark Tuborg," he ordered. He wondered if he shouldn't give up his project and go back to his own time. He was probably dead anyway, he thought hazily, and it was ridiculous to be wearing himself out this way, for a reason which was no longer sensible. It was a good thing he hadn't let Ruth tie herself down to such an incompetent, muddle-headed, unlucky, accident-prone kind of a man.

He was startled back to sanity by hearing, from the table behind him, the word "moon." He switched his chair around to look at the speaker.

At the table were a boy of about nineteen, and a girl a year or so younger, obviously American, and obviously smitten by each other. The boy was drinking beer while the girl sipped lemonade and nibbled at the salted pistachio nuts in the dish before her. They were holding hands under the table, and exchanging intimate remarks.

It's a shame to interrupt them,

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thought Peter, but if I heard what I thought I heard— He coughed, and the boy looked up.

"Excuse me," he said, "but you seem to be fellow Americans."

"That's right, we are," said the boy. "We're on a tour. We left our ship at Suez, and we're joining her tomorrow at Alexandria. I know it's a slow way to travel, but you do get to see things."

"Isn't Egypt wonderful?" said the girl.

"I'd like to ask you something." Peter shifted uncomfortably in his chair. "Did I hear one of you mention the moon? Were you talking about that ship that got back yesterday?"

The girl lowered her eyes, and the boy turned red.

"I don't think so."

"But I distinctly heard one of you use the word 'moon.'"

"That was me," said the girl, shyly, "but it didn't have anything to do with that ship. I just told Jerry, here, that I bet he'd even be jealous of the man in the moon. But it was too bad about the men on that ship, wasn't it?"

Peter leaned forward. "Yes, indeed. A terrible tragedy. But due to—that is, due to the pressure of events, I haven't been able to learn quite all the details. Perhaps you can supply them. I understand that two of the crew were killed on the trip. Is that correct?"

"That's what we heard on the radio."

"Do you remember who they were?"

The boy frowned. "I remember one name, in a vague way, because a fellow in my class had the same name. Somebody named Danforth, I think."

Bill Danforth! Peter sighed. Happy-go-lucky Bill, who was always willing to take his chances.

But he could not waste time now in grieving.

"And the name of the other one?"

"I can't tell you exactly," said the girl, with a soft giggle. "Everybody always says I have the weakest memory! But I do remember it was somebody named Peter."

"Peter *what?*"

"I don't remember. But I do remember laughing, and mentioning it to Jerry, here, because there were two men on the ship both named Peter, and their last names sounded so much ailke, and it seemed so silly, and I remember asking Jerry, here, how their wives ever told them apart. Why, is it important? Does it matter?"

"No," said Peter wearily. "It doesn't matter. Nothing matters. Nothing at all."

He could feel their eyes staring at his back as he left his beer unfinished, and walked down the stairs.

HE stood at the street entrance, in despair. Three hours gone, and nothing accomplished. Could he visit a library? But the Egyptian libraries, even if they carried the English paper, would be closed today, since it was Friday. There was a library at

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the American Embassy, but he did not dare go there, for he might run into somebody who knew him. Wasn't there any way in the world an intelligent man could solve such a simple problem as finding a copy of yesterday's paper—short of waiting until yesterday arrived?

A brown-faced urchin with a wooden box on his shoulder accosted him.

"Shine your shoes, mister?".

"Shoes don't matter," said Peter absently.

"I give good shoe shine."

"Shoes are not important." On sudden impulse he asked, "You don't happen to know, I suppose, where I can buy a copy of yesterday's paper?"

"Okay, mister," said the boy.

His heart pounding with a wild hope, Peter stooped and clutched the boy's shoulder. "You mean you know where to get one? A copy of *yesterday's* paper, mind!"

The boy looked alarmed, and tried to pull away. "Okay, mister!"

"Don't be afraid, just show me where the place is, right away!"

But the boy pulled away, with dilated eyes, and almost crying, he bleated out, "Okay, mister! I give good shoe shine."

Peter let go and the boy raced down the street. Shoulders slumped, Peter walked on slowly. But he had taken only a few steps when a heavy body lurched into him from behind, and he whirled to look into the beaming face and slightly unfocussed eyes of a jovial American sailor.

"Sorry, buddy," said the sailor, "but these Egyptian sidewalks ain't very steady. Pretty uncertain country, this is."

"How right you are," said Peter, and started to walk away. But the sailor looked sympathetic and stopped him with a sunburned hand poked towards his chest.

"Put'er there, mister. You look like you'd lost your last friend. But I'll be your friend. What makes you look so down-cast? Did somebody die?"

"Yes, somebody died," said Peter.

"Who died?"

"I don't know. I've been trying this whole blessed day to get hold of a copy of yesterday's paper, so I could find out."

"Tough luck," said the sailor. "But I don't see why you want to read the paper if it prints bad news like that. Why don't you just ignore the whole thing?"

He began to laugh, and grabbed Peter's arm. "Say, that's good, isn't it? Just ignore the whole thing! Just like the story my uncle used to tell. You wanna hear this. When my uncle was a boy he lived on a farm, and there was this cat, see—"

Peter pulled away and walked on rapidly, but when he reached the corner and was looking for a cab, he felt his shoulder grabbed again, and there was the sailor, still laughing.

"You shouldn't walk so fast on these unreliable sidewalks," he said. "It's hard for me to keep up with you. Well, this story my uncle used to tell, see, when he was a boy he lived on a farm, and they had this

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cat, and this cat she—"

"Taxi!"

A taxi screeched to a stop and Peter jumped in and slammed the door. The sailor peered through the dusty window, a hurt expression on his face.

"Still worrying about that paper, mister? You'd feel better if you'd let me tell you about my uncle and this cat—"

The acceleration of the car shook him off, and Peter glanced around to see him still standing there on the corner, looking puzzled and forlorn.

IT was half past two as the taxi bumped back along the Pyramids road. Peter sagged against the lumpy upholstery in utter defeat. The strains and tensions of the last three and a half hours had been so great that he could scarcely remember the original purpose of this wild journey into time. He could hardly have stated why he came, and what he hoped to gain. None of his reasons seemed to make any sense. He was conscious mainly of being unutterably tired, and of being very hungry.

He could not remember having been so hungry since he was a small boy. How many hours had he been without food, he wondered? A minute? Four hours? Sixteen hours? Or two weeks? But the philosophical complications of travelling into the future were too intricate for his dulled mind, and he thought only, that it would be nice to have a sandwich.

Ahead of them on the road he saw a neon sign, *Pyramids Grill.* It was a down-at-the-heels place, which he would never have chosen if he had had more time, but it was handy.

"Stop here," he ordered the driver. "I'm hungry and tired. I'll just sit here. You go inside and get me a cheese sandwich."

In less than five minutes he had a crudely wrapped sandwich in his hand, and was rolling on toward the Pyramids, but by now he lacked the energy even to eat.

Pulled up once more in front of the Great Pyramid, he paid off his driver, waved away the guides, and trudged on through the sand.

An Arab came running after him. "Tell your fortune, sir?"

Peter shook his head, and kept on walking. He'd had enough of trying to look into the future. Up the slopes and onto the firmer stony ground and at last the wonderfully desirable ditch which led down into the stone room where Tempestuous Tessie waited.

It was five minutes to three when he sank down onto the chair and closed the steel cradle. His uneaten sandwich lying limply in one hand, he leaned back, closed his eyes, and waited for the shift in time.

WHEN Peter Harrison opened his eyes in his own time segment, it was still eleven o'clock of the night he had left. He re-arranged the apparatus as it should be, plodded through the long tunnel back to the room called Temporal Research. There he pulled up a chair, laid his head on the desk, and slept.

It was dawn when he awoke. A

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sudden spasm of fear lest he be found in the laboratory sent him hurrying into the corridor, down the escalator, and out of the building, where he exhibited his identification to the incurious soldier on guard.

As he walked across the desert toward the line of Institute jeeps, one of which would take him to his room at the Semiramis, he remembered his sandwich.

He tore off a piece of the paper so he could bite into the exposed corner of the sandwich, but kept the rest in place to protect the bread from his sweaty, dirty hand, and began munching on the bread and cheese, peeling back the wrapping as he ate.

As he walked, he thought. His trip had accomplished nothing that he had hoped for. He still knew, no more than the rest of the crew, what his individual fate would be. He did know, of course, that the ship would return—but the other men had never doubted it. What were his chances of coming back alive?

The return of the ship was a hundred per cent certain. And he had added to his knowledge the fact that two of the crew would be killed, and two would survive. He had learned, furthermore, that one Peter had lived, and one Peter had died. But which one? Had that information really helped him any? His individual chances were still exactly what they had been in the first place—fifty-fifty.

Bill Danforth had always laughed at him for being a conservative. Ruth had teased him ever since he had known her as being a man who wouldn't take a chance, a man who had to be sure. But he had always thought of himself just as a sensible man who tried to play safe.

For the first time in his life, it occurred to him now that there are times when a man is a fool to play safe. While you're alive, he thought, you have to take chances. Even when you can go into the future, you can't always find out what the safe thing is to do. He was tired of being cautious. If you were always cautious, look at the fun you'd miss!

The sun was rising in the east, and the long black shadows of the Pyramids stretched out across the desert sands. Peter straightened his shoulders, and took another bite of his sandwich.

Well, he thought, I've made up my mind. After today, nobody will have any grounds for calling me a coward, or kidding me for betting only on a sure thing.

He lifted his sandwich. He stared at it in the growing light, and his skin prickled. The paper by which he held the bread was a piece of torn newsprint, with English words on it. He dropped the bread to the ground and stared greedily at the mutilated column of print. Yes, it was a piece of yesterday's paper, a part of the story about the landing of the *Tycho*.

Frantically he read the fragment, searching for names.

The piece he held said:

(Cont. from page 1)

Among the survivors w

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Col. Carl Johansson, o
Hyperphysics Insti
and Col. Peter Har
distinguished graduat

That was all.

With a yell of rage he dashed the paper to the ground, ripped it to pieces with his boots, and stamped the fragments into the sand.

Behind him he heard a shrill call, and turned his head briefly to see the distant figure of a white-gowned Arab running after him.

"Ya Pasha! Ya Pasha!" he called, waving a long arm.

Doesn't Abdou ever sleep? thought Peter angrily. I wish he'd leave me alone.

"You dropped a piece of paper!" called Abdou. "Here is the piece you dropped!"

Peter stopped dead. That corner of paper he had torn off, when he took his first bite of the sandwich! That must be the missing fragment which held the final letters of the incomplete name.

Did the black type read "rison?" Or "riman?"

Then he shrugged his shoulders. What does it matter? he muttered to himself. Only a fool demands certainty in this world. And even if he read the paper, the chances would still be fifty-fifty that the editor had gotten the names twisted, just as everybody else did. Even if it read "rison" he couldn't be sure that was right!

He turned his back on Abdou, and strode on toward the waiting jeep. He crawled into the seat, woke the sleepy driver, and in a voice of authority gave his order.

"Take me to the American Embassy."

The driver stretched, and tried to smooth his rumpled hair. He yawned.

"But they won't be awake at the Embassy yet, sir. It isn't six, yet."

"Never mind that," said Peter. "Take me to the Embassy. I'm going to make arrangements for a wedding!"

THE END

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Lost Continents

By L. Sprague de Camp.

No. 8

The SILVERY KINGDOM*

Here in a sleep of exhaustion lay long-tested, godlike Odysseus;
On to the Phaiakes' city however proceeded Athena.
Once they resided in spacious Hypereia near the Kyklopes,
Who with superior power did evermore plunder them until
Godlike Nausithoös thence unto Scheria brought them and placed them
Distant from laboring men.

The Odyssey

TO say that Plato's Atlantis "is" a sunken Atlantic island or America or anything else in the real world, without qualification, shows muddy thinking. Plato's Atlantis, strictly speaking, was an idea in Plato's mind, nothing more and nothing less. Plato embodied this idea in the form of writing on a roll of papyrus, which writing has been many times copied and reproduced and translated in many forms since Plato's time, and other men, reading Plato's dialogues, have in turn had ideas engendered in their own minds.

Of course there must have existed something in the real world to give Plato the basis for his tale—to engender Plato's concept of Atlantis. But this need not have been at all identical with the Atlantis described by Plato in *Timaios* and *Kritias*.

If I seem to be laboring the obvious, it is because some Atlantists fail to keep this distinction in mind, to the confusion of everybody. So when I say that Atlantis "is" this or that, I mean merely that this or that impinged upon Plato's senses and incited him to compose the Atlantis story. And this real thing can be simple or complex (that is, a combination of different stories, myths, or facts) and it need not look much like the final product.

Philosophers have a term *isomorphism*, meaning that a map, picture,

*Slightly condensed from *Lost Continents: The Atlantis Theme in History, Science, & Literature*, by L. Sprague de Camp; Phila.: Prime Press, 1952; copr. 1952 by L. Sprague de Camp.

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description, or other symbol corresponds point for point with its referent (the thing it symbolizes). Now, Plato's Atlantis tale is obviously not completely isomorphic with any one real source. We have already thrown out the Greek gods and the prehistoric Athenian Empire as fictions, and now it seems that the sinking continent must go also, as just too improbable.

The possibility remains that Plato's Atlantis was based upon traditions or rumors of some far-off civilization that flourished once but later disappeared, without necessarily having been on a sunken Atlantic island. The Atlantis-in-America theory was of this kind. Then in 1675 a Swedish scholar, Olof Rudbeck, wrote a ponderous treatise in several volumes to prove that Atlantis was Sweden. He began by assuming that Plato's Atlantis and Homer's isle of Ogygia were the same. Then, from the scanty and vague sailing directions in the *Odyssey* and some remarks by the unscientific Plutarch on the shape of the earth, Rudbeck inferred that Atlantis must have lain between the latitudes of Mecklenberg, Germany, and Vinililand, Sweden. By bending the poetry of the Viking Age to his service he proved to his own satisfaction that Atlantis was Sweden with its capital near Upsala, and was moreover the fountainhead of all civilization.

Since Rudbeck's time Atlantis has likewise been "found" in Africa, Spain, Ceylon, and practically all other parts of the world. Rudbeck's work incited the French astronomer Bailly, a distinguished victim of the French Revolution, to compose an even more extreme origin for Atlantis. Bailly in his *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne* "developed a grandiose system of racial migrations, based upon certain recurrent errors in astronomical tables brought back by some missionaries from India," which errors he maintained "could not have been drawn up from observations made in India at all, but in Central Asia, at a latitude of 49°." Atlantis, Bailly concluded, was really Spitsbergen in the Arctic Ocean. In ancient times before the earth had cooled to its present temperature (an idea from Buffon) Spitsbergen was comfortably warm, but its subsequent refrigeration made the Atlanteans migrate south to Tatary. Later this race of giants dwelt in the Caucasus, in the region of Caf (an imaginary mountain in Iranian mythology) and laid the foundations for all the ancient civilizations of Asia.

Being a euhemerist (one who thinks one can turn myth into history by leaving out the supernatural elements) Bailly deduced that Atlas was an astronomer-king of Spitsbergen who invented the terrestrial globe; Ogygia and Hyperborea were likewise parts of the bleak Svalbard Archipelago. He conducted a long correspondence with the politely skeptical old Voltaire on the subject, and was attacked by the Keltomaniacs who were trying to derive all civilization from the Druids.

Keltomania had begun with a sev-

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enteenth-century Irishman, John Toland, who expanded the references of Pliny the Elder and other ancient writers to the Druids' white robes and golden ornaments into a description of an occult brotherhood preserving the arcane wisdom of antiquity. The Keltomaniacs founded occult societies like the Ancient Order of Druids to exploit this craze, and perpetrated remarkable literary forgeries like the "Ossianic Poems" of James Macpherson in the 1760's and the *Barzaz-Breiz,* or songs of the Breton Bards, of Villemarqué in 1839.

For the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were the heyday of the speculative mythologist, when any scholar felt qualified to construct, on the basis of any ambiguous mythological allusion in the works of some jejune late-Roman poetaster or obscure Byzantine annotator, a whole new cosmos-shaking theory of the origins of mankind and of civilization. Hence the conjectures of Buffon and Saint-Vincent about the washing away of Atlantis by earthquake waves, or of Carli about its destruction by a comet.

One contributor to this stream of speculation was Francis Wilford, who in 1805 advanced an Atlanto-Druidic hypothesis according to which the British Isles were a remnant of a former Atlantic continent where the events of the Old Testament had actually taken place (and not in Palestine as most people thought). Wilford was a British officer in India. When his Indian acquaintances learned of his enthusiasm they obligingly forged and sold him a great mass of Sanskrit documents to help him to prove his contention: ancient poems and the like. Wilford wrote up his doctrine as a series of articles for an English magazine; then learned how he had been hoaxed, and caused the articles to be published with large deletions that made them practically unintelligible.

Wilford's theory was taken over by another Neodruidist: that pious, imaginative, and rather stupid though talented artist and poet William Blake. Blake incorporated the Wilford hypothesis in scattered allusions throughout his turgid and tedious mass of apocalyptic free-verse. According to Blake, King Albion led the survivors of the sinking of Atlantis to Britain where he founded the Druids.

For all this foofaraw the real Druids of ancient Britain and Gaul were neither better nor worse than most barbarian priesthoods. Like Aztec and Mayan priests they were much given to human sacrifice, despite the pathetic efforts of some modern Keltophiles like Talbot Mundy to clear them of the charge. The cult of Neodruidism flourished until driven out of business in the late nineteenth century by the competition of occultisms based upon Oriental traditions of Egypt, India, and Tibet.

Meanwhile another Atlantist school, started by Serranus in the sixteenth century, had been proclaiming that Atlantis was Palestine: the reverse of the theory of Wilford and

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Blake. Like Kosmas they deemed Plato's story to be but a corrupted bit of Biblical history. Baër, a Swede living in France, published a book in 1762 to prove that Atlantis was Judea, the ten kingdoms of Atlantis the twelve tribes of Israel, the Atlantic Ocean the Red Sea, and Atlas the mythical patriarch Israel himself.

During the last century North Africa has become a favorite haunt of Atlantis-hunters.

Gordon started the Atlantis-in-Africa school in 1868 by placing Atlantis in the Sahara; then, following him, Félix Berlioux in 1874 claimed to have located the capital of Atlantis on the west coast of Morocco between Casablanca and Agadir, where the Atlas mountain chain slopes down to the sea. Here, said Berlioux, and not on any island, lay Plato's city of Atlantis, otherwise Kernë, the capital of the Atlantioi in the account of Diodoros the Sicilian. Once the Atlanteans had ruled a great North African empire, but were defeated in the thirteenth century B.C. by a combined Egyptian-Phoenician army while the Berber Gaetulians took their capital. The surviving Atlanteans lived on as a subject race, and traces of them persist in the form of blondness and blue eyes occasionally met in the North African mountains. And on the strength of verbal similarity alone, the Medusa and Perseus of the North African myths of Diodoros are identified with the historical Medes and Persians—a treacherous line of argument.

Kernë bobs up elsewhere in ancient literature. A little before 500 B.C. the Carthaginian admiral Hanno made a celebrated voyage down the West African coast, and by good luck a Greek translation of his report has survived. The sight of the country on fire alarmed Hanno's sailors, who did not know that the natives were burning the grass for pasturage, as they still do. The crews killed three women of a hairy race whom the natives called *gorillai* (but which were probably chimpanzees) and took their skins back to Carthage to hang in a temple.

Hanno ended his voyage at a small island which he named Kernë—either the modern Herné at the mouth of the Rio de Oro, or Arguin at Cape Blanco 200 miles further south. Here for many centuries trade was carried on by the method used in those days for dealing with natives who feared slavers. First, the trader set out his goods and withdrew. Then the natives approached the spot and set out what they were willing to pay for each item and withdrew in their turn. The trader, who had been watching from a distance, came back and either took the price offered or declined it, and so on until a deal was reached without either party's coming within shouting distance of the other.

Berlioux's Moorish-Atlantis theory begot numerous progeny such as Pierre Benoît's colorful but rather depressing novel *L'Atlantide*, one of the best-known of the large family of lost-continent novels.

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L'Atlantide recounts the adventures of a pair of French army officers who find Atlantis in the Ahaggar Mountains of southern Algeria, the country of the Tuareg (singular, Targi), a tall truculent tribe of Berbers among whom the men wear the veil but the women do not. In the novel, the Ahâggar is ruled by an imperious young lady named Antinéa, supposedly the name of the Tuareg's legendary matriarch Tin Hinan.

Antinéa is a typical Rider Haggard heroine (or villainess), resembling his "Asika" in *The Yellow God* (from which several plot elements are borrowed) or his "Ayesha" in *She*. She is the last descendant of Poseidon and Kleito, and keeps a pet leopard named Hiram for a bodyguard. When Europeans wander into her reservation she makes them her lovers, and such is her fatal beauty that when she discards them they all commit suicide or otherwise come to a bad end. Thereupon Antinéa has their corpses plated with orichalc and mounted in niches in a red marble chamber maintained for the purpose. Benoît, like the French Atlantist Claudius Roux, assumed that the "submersion" of Atlantis was actually a rise, causing the Saharan Seas to dry up—though geology indicates that the Sahara has been land continuously ever since the early Cenozoic Era.

L'Atlantide had considerable success as lost-continent novels go. It has been published twice in English, as *Atlantida* in the United States, and as *The Queen of Atlantis* in Great Britain. Moreover it has twice been made into a motion picture. About 1929 it appeared as a French silent film with Brigitte Helm, and again in 1949 as United Artists' *Siren of Atlantis*.

The latter unfortunately turned out to be a remarkably dull movie. The late Maria Montez was cast as Antinéa with a series of eye-filling gowns and a Spanish accent, while Jean Pierre Aumont, her real-life husband, gave a glassy-eyed performance as the hapless French officer beguiled by Antinéa into murdering his best friend, a brother-officer who has antagonized the temptress by resisting her lure. Although the story has considerable cinematic possibilities, the production in this case was so hammy that the final result was unintentionally funny. The picture was such a financial disaster that the following year Señorita Montez sued the producer (a man with the Atlantean-sounding name of Nebenzal) for the unpaid balance of her salary, and got a $38,000 judgment against him.

Altogether *L'Atlantide* cannot be considered a very good novel. Though better than some lost-continent stories, it remains a not too successful imitation of Haggard (who in fact once considered suing Benoît for plagiarism) and the theme of the beautiful siren the mere sight of whom turns strong men's wills to water seems naïve in these unsentimental days.

Benoît's novel is said to have in-

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cited the volatile Count Byron Khun de Prorok to go hunting Atlantis in the Sahara. De Prorok started out as a competent archeologist who did sound work on the site of Carthage. Later he seems to have gone in for a type of exploration that, if it produced less substantial scientific returns, provided him with adventure and furnished lively copy for his books. He hinted at Atlantean traces in the Sahara and in Yucatán, and in 1925 penetrated the Ahaggar Massif. There he opened the tomb of some Tarqi dignitary and excitedly announced that he had found the bones of Tin Hinan herself—a view in which the museum experts, however, did not concur.

Meanwhile Knötel in 1893 had put the Atlantean empire in Northwest Africa, with the reservation that the Atlanteans proper were a caste of priests of the god Thoth-Ouranos-Hermes, who had come to those parts from Chaldea.

Between 1908 and 1926 Captain Elgee in England and Leo Frobenius in Germany developed another theory, of Atlantis in Nigeria, on the West African coast a few hundred miles north of the Equator. The explorer Frobenius discovered things in Yorubaland (part of Nigeria) that convinced him he had found Atlantis, complete with elephants, luxuriant vegetation, blue-clad natives, and copper-ore. Frobenius equated the Nigerian god Olokon with Poseidon, and pointed out that the land had been the home of powerful maritime nations ever since the thirteenth century at least. He also convinced himself that the Yoruba culture contained many non-African elements such as the short bow, tattooing, number-magic, and the king's sacred parasol.

Civilization, he thought, had begun on a lost continent in the Pacific Ocean, whence it had spread to Asia and thence westward, stimulating the rise of such cultures as the Egyptian and the Atlanto-Nigerian. Tartessos in Spain was an outpost of this African Atlantis, and the Uphaz mentioned in the Bible along with Tartessos ("Tarshish") as a source of gold and trade-goods was Yorubaland itself, whose capital was at the site of modern Ilife.

The main weakness of Frobenius's theory (aside from the impossible Pacific continent) was his conviction that he could trace all the early migrations of mankind by comparison of their artistic symbolism, for the degree of resemblance between any pair of symbols, as any trade-mark lawyer will tell you, is a very subjective matter.

Following Frobenius, the geologist Paul Borchardt of Munich undertook in 1926 to find Atlantis in Tunisia, in the region of the shotts or salt-marshes that stretch westward from the Gulf of Qabès which the ancients called the Little Syrtis. The biggest of these dismal swamps, the Shott el Jerid, was probably the ancient Lake Tritonis where Diodoros located his Amazons and which played a part in the story of the Argonauts. This body of water, said Borchardt, was the

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original Atlantic Sea.

Furthermore Borchardt identified the ancient Mount Atlas, not with the modern Moroccan range of that name, but with the Ahaggar Mountains. He tried to correlate the names of Poseidon's ten sons as given by Plato with the names of modern Berber tribes, and thought the "Pillars of Herakles" were real temple pillars instead of the mountains flanking the Strait of Gibraltar. He deemed the mineral wealth of the shott country a confirmation of his theory, and suggested that Atlantis with its brass and orichalc, the brazen palace of Alkinoös in the *Odyssey,* and the City of Brass in the *Arabian Nights* were all one and the same. Near Qabès he found the remains of a fortress which he took to be the city of Atlantis itself; alas, it turned out to be Roman.

Undiscouraged by this debacle Albert Herrmann went hunting Atlantis in southern Tunisia. He thought he had found it in the village of Rhelissia, where he discovered traces of irrigation works pointing to a higher culture than that of the present Rhelissians. He reasoned that Plato was wrong on three counts. First, he took Herodotos's meaning for "Atlantic" instead of the alleged older meaning referring to Lake Tritonis. Second, Atlantis fell in the fourteenth or thirteenth century B.C. instead of the ninety-sixth.

Third and lastly, Solon and his priest, conversing through an interpreter, got fouled up in translating Egyptian measurements into Greek units, so that everything came out thirty times too big. With that correction Plato's Atlantis, irrigated plain and all, shrinks to modest dimensions that would fit comfortably into a corner of Tunisia.

And Herrmann went on to derive all civilization from Friesland, of which Atlantis was merely a colony in the days of Frisian glory.

One more member of the Afro-Atlantean school, Butavand, got around the lack of tangible Atlantean relics in North Africa by locating the lost Atlantis at the bottom of the Gulf of Qabès off the Tunisian coast. He assumed that the Gulf was once dry land, out to about the present 100-fathom line, until an earthquake lowered this land beneath the waters of the Mediterranean and at the same time raised the bottom of the suppositious Saharan Sea, which thereupon drained off and dried up. Perhaps the Strait of Gibraltar broke open at this time too.

Finally, one of the latest and also the most plausible African interpretations of Atlantis is that of Silbermann. After surveying the general field of Atlantist theories, he pointed out that in view of the known chronology of Egyptian civilization and the difficulty of handing down a story by word of mouth alone for more than a few centuries, Plato's dating of the rise and fall of Atlantis 900 years before Solon's time could be dismissed right away: if such a civilization had existed, it would have been entirely forgotten long before the rise of Egypt.

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Silbermann thought that the Atlantis story was originally a Phoenician account of a war with the Libyans of the shott region of Tunisia that took place around 2540 B.C. About the eleventh or tenth century, he thought, some Egyptian of Saïs made this story into a romance, placing the events "in the time of Horus," which date Plato interpreted much later as about 9600 B.C. This romance may have been forgotten for a time, but it was revived about 600 B.C. when Niku II rebuilt the Egyptian Navy and there was a search for books about Libya. The story was also translated into Greek for the benefit of the Hellenes of Saïs, and one Greek version formed the basis for Solon's account while another was preserved as the story of the Atlantioi in Diodoros of Sicily.

These theories, ingenious though some of them be, can hardly all be true at once. Besides their obvious mutual incompatibility, many of them reveal the patriotic desire of some Atlantis-hunters, from Rudbeck on, to prove their own land the source of all civilization. While such a motive may arouse a certain sentimental sympathy, it has nothing to do with science.

Still, the general concept of a fallen civilization whereof rumors helped to inspire Plato in his literary labors is not implausible. Perhaps the leading contenders for the honor of having served as the prototype of Atlantis are Minoan Crete, Carthage, and Tartessos. Let us look at them in that order.

In Classical times Crete was a depressed backwater where Dorian landlords bullied their native tenants, a haunt of pirates and a recruiting-ground for mercenary archers. A web of legend surrounded it: Crete, it was said, had once been a great sea-power ruled by King Minos, the son of Zeus (in the form of a bull) and Europë. Hephaistos, the divine smith, gave Minos a brazen robot named Talos who kept strangers away from Crete by throwing stones at them.

Once Minos prayed to Poseidon to send him a bull from the sea, promising to sacrifice it to the god. Poseidon furnished the bull, but Minos liked it so well that he sacrificed another in its stead. In revenge Poseidon caused Minos's wife Pasiphaë (sister to the enchantress Kirkë) to fall in love with the bull. The queen prevailed upon the skillful Daidalos, an Athenian fugitive, to arrange a tryst with the animal. Daidalos did so, having disguised Pasiphaë as a cow. Poseidon also made the bull so savage that Minos had to appeal the Herakles to come and take the thing away.

Pasiphaë in due time gave birth to a bull-headed man, Asterios, known as the Minotaur, whom Minos shut up in the maze that the obliging Daidalos built for him. Subsequently Minos warred on Athens because a son of his had been killed there, and in the peace treaty demanded seven youths and seven maidens each year for the Minotaur to eat. You

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probably heard as a child how Theseus broke up the racket by killing the Minotaur with the help of Minos's daughter Ariadne (whom he eloped with but lost to the god Dionysos) and Daidalos, who then made his famous flight from Crete with his son Ikaros.

For many centuries scholars tried to guess what historical reality lay behind the Minos-myths, especially the recurrence of the bull-motif. Most of their guesses went wide of the mark until Evans's excavations, begun about 1895, disclosed the basis for the story: the public spectacles of Minoan Crete at which young men and women performed perilous gymnastics on the horns of live bulls.

Crete flourished as a naval and commercial power for about two thousand years until it fell in the time of the folk-migrations at the end of the second millenium B.C. Almost nothing of its actual history is preserved, since we cannot read Cretan writing, and the Minos-legends are too scanty and mythical to recover history from. However, Crete was allied with Egypt during much of its history. The ruling class in the capital at Knossos lived a refined and luxurious life with startlingly modern bathrooms. The men, small dark Mediterraneans, wore corsets and loin-cloths; the women, bare-breasted big-skirted dresses that look like a burlesque version of Victorian costume.

The Cretan Empire was a federation of island cities under the dominance of Knossos. Colonies on the Greek mainland, at Mykenai and Tiryns, became so important that after the destruction of Knossos by earthquake about 1400 they assumed the leadership of the federation. Then as the power of the empire declined, its local governments were taken over by the barbarous Greeks (*Achaiwoi* they called themselves, later *Achaioi* or Achaeans) as the Germans took over the West Roman Empire piecemeal 1500 years later. Homer presumably portrays a romantic reflection of the life of this period, when barbarians who have formed a taste for the niceties of civilization have seized control of it and are exploiting its luxuries.

In the early years of this century K. T. Frost in England pointed out striking resemblances between Plato's Atlantis and the archeologists' Crete. Both were island kingdoms, sea-powers, that met sudden downfall at the hands of men from Greece. The self-centered Egyptians, he thought, heard rumors of the conquest of Crete by "Mycenian" invaders from the Greek mainland, who later appeared among the barbarian invaders repelled by Rameses III about 1190 B.C. Hearing no more of the Mycenians, whom the Achaeans had conquered in their turn, the Egyptians assumed that Crete had disappeared and invented a submersion legend to account for it.

But we cannot take Frost's theory too seriously even though Balch and Magoffin followed him in it. For one thing we don't know that the Mycenians conquered Crete. For another the Egyptians are unlikely in a mat-

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ter of 600 years or so to have moved Crete clear out of the Mediterranean, enlarged it a hundred-fold, and predated it by 8000 years. Still the Cretan public works and bull-ceremonies are suggestive; perhaps they entered the Atlantis story as fragments which Plato picked up and which his subconscious wove into his Atlantean fiction. Spence explains the Minoan-Atlantean resemblances by supposing Crete to be an offshoot or colony of Atlantis; but we have already excluded Spence's hypothesis on geological grounds.

Although Spence disposes of the alternative theory, Atlantis-in-Carthage, in the same manner, Carthage (proposed by the eminent Homerist Victor Bérard) is harder to get rid of. It lies in the right direction from Greece, which Crete does not, and furthermore was not only an imperialistic sea-power, but also a city whose plan suggests that of the city of Atlas.

"The low, walled hill of the Byrsa or citadel on which stood the splendid temple of Aesculapius at Carthage was strengthened on the mainland side by three great ramparts which stretched across the breadth of the peninsula, and which were fortified at intervals by towers. Below the market-place and the Senate House a vast waterway, 1066 feet wide, had been constructed round a circular island on which stood the admiral's headquarters. The docks surrounding this waterway were roofed in by a great circular colonnade supported by Ionic pillars, and were capable of accommodating war-vessels of the largest size." From this basin "a narrow channel ran southward into a mercantile harbour 1396 feet long. A great sea-wall masked this entrance and prevented attack by a hostile fleet. Marshes surrounded the landward side, and the water-supply was drawn from great cisterns on the neighboring hills, which seem also to have been used as baths."

Carthage was founded about 850 B.C. by the Tyrian princess Elissar ("Dido"), a daughter of King Mutton I, who fled from the tyranny of her brother Pygmalion. Though not the first Phoenician settlement in North Africa, it grew fast, and after Tyre fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 573 B.C. it became the ruler of the Western Mediterranean. To secure control of the western trade, especially with the tin region of southwestern Britain, Carthaginian warships stopped non-Carthaginian trading vessels and threw their crews overboard. This ironclad monopoly, not broken until the Punic Wars, accounts for the haziness of Greek knowledge of the Western Mediterranean in Plato's time.

Both Greeks and Carthaginians colonized Sicily and tried hard to throw each other out. The Carthaginian suffete Malchus almost conquered the whole island in 550 B.C., and wars continued, with time out for recovery and local revolutions, for three centuries. Hamilcar almost got the island again in 480 B.C. but the forces of Syracuse and Agrigentum beat him at Himera in a great battle

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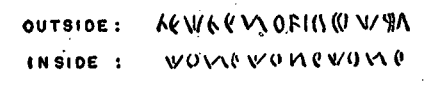
almost as decisive in world history as the Greek victory over the Persians at Salamis in the same year. Plato had a chance to learn of the Carthaginian menace at close range during his visits to Syracuse, and the luxuriance and avarice of the Punic merchant aristocracy—(or, to be fair, the luxuriance and avarice attributed to them by their Greek and Roman enemies) may have suggested the growth of those vices in Atlantis. On the other hand Carthage was a republic (not a kingdom like Atlantis) and in Plato's time, so far from disappearing, it was still growing in power.

That leaves Tartessos—the Biblical Tarshish, Jonah's destination—a flourishing old city-state in southwestern Spain, near modern Cadiz, as a source for Atlantis.

The earliest reference to Tartessos is in *Isaiah,* where the prophet, sermonizing on the fall of Tyre, says: "Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste. . . ." Arrian is probably wrong in saying that Tartessos was a Phoenician colony; on the other hand the affinities of its people are not known for sure. Cretan origin has been proposed, and the name of the place sounds like some of those applied to the Etruscans, whom the Greeks called *Tyrrhenoi* and the Egyptians *Turšha,* and who were said in Classical times to be from Lydia. The Etruscans, though, called themselves *Rasenna,* which sounds nothing like Tartessos.

Almost the only archeological relic of Tartessos is a ring inscribed with the following characters:



found on the site by Schulten in 1923. The alphabet seems to be related to those of the Greeks and Etruscans, and the inscription on the inner surface consists of a single four-letter word repeated three times — perhaps something like *psonr* or *khonr,* whatever that may mean. The repetition suggests a magical spell, something like "eeny, meeny, miny, mo." Pre-Roman Iberia used at least two alphabets, neither deciphered for sure yet.

Whatever its origin, Tartessos long flourished as a trading and mining city. The Phoenicians, arriving around 1000 B.C., found silver so common that in order to carry away as much as they could in return for olive-oil and other wares, they cast their anchor-stones of silver. During the tenth century B.C., when King Solomon and King Hiram of Tyre had their profitable partnership, their joint fleet used to make a round trip to Tartessos every three years, returning with "gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks." And Ezekiel, lamenting the fall of Tyre, said: "Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead they traded in thy fairs." The metals came from the mines of southern Spain, where a Rio Tinto mining town is still called Tharsis. The "apes" might be either from Africa,

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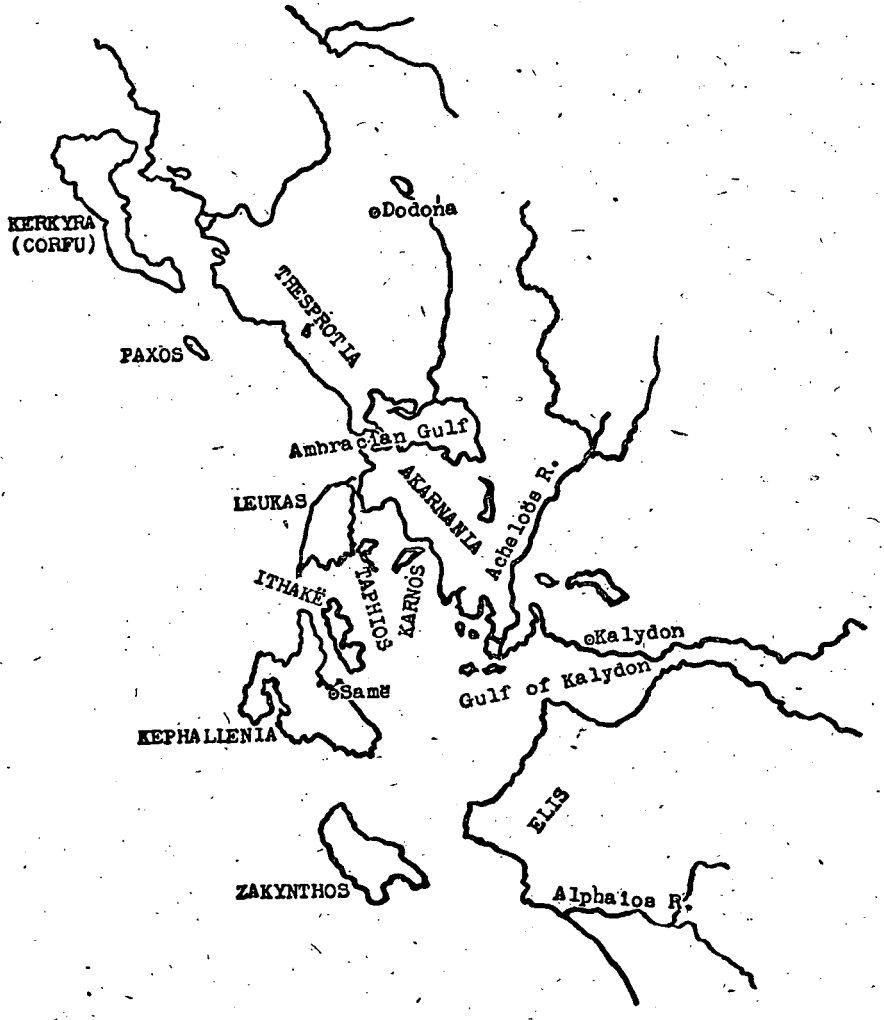

THE KINGDOM OF ODYSSEUS—the west coast of Greece and the islands off it mentioned by Homer.

or from Gibraltar, where monkeys still live. The "ivory" might be from the Moroccan elephant, a smallish variety of the African elephant used in war by the Carthaginians and exterminated in Roman times, and the

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"peacocks," *thukkiyim,* might be either the now rare Congo peacock or an error for *sukkiyim,* "slaves." An allusion by Herodotos to "Tartessian weasels" suggests a fur-trade, and later Tartessos exported brasswork to Greece.

The Greeks made the acquaintance of Tartessos about 631 B.C., when a Samian ship under Kolaios, bound for Egypt, was blown far out of its course by an easterly gale and ended up at Tartessos—a record detour. The Samians made six talents from their voyage: an enormous sum for the time, equivalent to $75,000 or more in modern money. Next came men from Phokaia in Ionia, who also opened up the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian Seas to Greek commerce and founded Marseilles. For their Tartessian trade the Phokaians used, not the tubby merchantman of the time, but the swift narrow fifty-oared pentakonter, which, if it carried less cargo, had a better chance of getting away when a Carthaginian galley came crawling like a giant insect over the horizon with the intent of making the interlopers walk the plank.

The first Phokaian traders found Tartessos ruled by King Arganthonios ("Silver-locks") though you need not believe with Herodotos that he lived 120 years and reigned eighty of them. The king liked his guests so well (perhaps trade had been dull of late, Tyre having fallen and Carthage not yet risen to her later eminence) that he suggested that if the Persians pressed them too hard at home, they should all move to his dominions. When they declined, he gave them enough money to build a great wall about their city.

In 546 B.C., however, Cyrus of Persia sent his general Harpagus with orders to take Phokaia. The people, despairing of holding out even behind their fine wall, persuaded Harpagus to withdraw for a while while they pondered terms; then they crowded into their ships and rowed away from their Asiatic homes. Hearing that Arganthonios's long life had ended, they went to Corsica instead of to Tartessos. Here they became embroiled with the Carthaginians and Etruscans, whose combined fleets they barely beat in a battle in 536.

The survivors picked up their families in their twenty remaining ships and resettled on the coast of Lucania in Italy.

In its heyday Tartessos was the leading city of southwestern Spain, then called Tartessis, whose people, the Turdetani or Turduli, were rated the most civilized in Spain. They had a caste system, and their own alphabet in which were recorded their poems, laws, and history, which told how the Ethiopians had once overrun North Africa and how some of them remained in the Atlas Mountains. These Turduli probably were among the people who lived in Iberia before Kelts from Gaul overran it at the beginning of recorded history. The unclassifiable Basque language is a legacy from these pre-Indo-European Iberians, and if we could read the pre-Roman Iberian inscriptions like that on Schulten's ring, some of

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them might prove to be written in languages related to Basque.

Tartessos stood at the mouth of the Tartessis or Baetis River, now the Guadalquivir (pronounced "gwadhal-kee-*veer*") a flat sandy region bordered by a sea dangerous for strong tides and a heavy surf. The region is sparsely populated today by a dark people taller and broader-headed than most Spaniards. In ancient times the river ended in a great bay which once reached inland as far as Hispalis (Seville). Tartessos stood on a large island that closed the mouth of the bay, so that the Guadalquivir had two mouths. In historical times the bay had partly silted up and grown islands, reminding us of the shoals left by the sinking of Atlantis. Now the bay has become a great malarial marsh, Las Marismas, and the northern arm of the river is dry land.

As they became acquainted with Tartessos, the Greeks introduced it into their legends. They had taken over from the Phoenicians the whole cycle of the tales of Herakles, the Tyrian Melkarth, probably a member of a widespread Near-Eastern family of lion-slaying mythical heroes represented by the Sumerian Gilgamesh and the Hebrew Sampson. Herakles-Melkarth was persistently associated with the Far West; besides his journey thither to fetch the Apples of the Hesperides and that to capture the infernal watchdog Kerberos, he had also gone there to lift the cattle of Geryon, a three-bodied giant who lived on the island of Erytheia. Herakles stopped at Tartessos where he erected two pillars, sometimes identified with the hills of Gibraltar and Ceuta (pronounced "*thay*-oo-ta") and sometimes with a pair of real pillars in the Temple of Herakles at Gades. Being overheated he threatened the sun with his bow, and the sun-god, admiring his nerve, lent him the golden goblet wherein he made his daily journey around the world. Herakles voyaged to Erytheia in this vessel, killed Geryon and his herdsman and dog, drove the cattle into the goblet, and sailed back to Tartessos, where he returned the mug to its owner. Therefore the Tartessians worshipped Herakles ever after.

Although Tartessos, according to Schulten, went back to the Neolithic Age, it acquired a rival in historic times. About 1100 B.C. the Phoenicians planted a colony on another island (since become a peninsula) twenty miles southwest of Tartessos, at the mouth of the Guadalete. They named their settlement *Ha-gadir*, "the hedge" or "the stockade," whence the Classical Gades and modern Cadiz. From the same root come the names of modern Agadir in Morocco and Gadeiros, one of Poseidon's sons in Plato's story.

Tartessos and Gades coëxisted until the rise of the Carthaginian Empire. Between 533 and 500 B.C. the Carthaginians were active around the Pillars; they sent Hanno down the African coast, reduced Gades to subjection, and in 509 extorted a treaty from Rome confirming their western monopoly. At the same time they sent another admiral, Himilco, "to explore

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the outer coasts of Europe." Like his colleague Hanno, Himilco published a report on his return, which we know from a poetical synopsis by the late-Roman poet Rufus Festus Avienus. Himilco evidently set out to make his readers' flesh creep. He had gone, he said, to the Tin Islands, where the Tartessians used to trade, and the round trip took four months—not because of the distance, but because:

There no breeze exists to propel
the ship forward;
Deadening is this sluggish sea's
still vapor.
Many seaweeds grow in the troughs
of the billows,
Slowing the ship like bushes, he
says, thus showing
Here to no great depth the sea de-
scends, and
Here the water barely covers the
bottom.
Here the beasts of the sea move
slowly wandering,
And among the sluggishly creeping
vessels
Languidly swim the great mon-
sters.

To make sure that prospective explorers got the idea, Himilco added that if one kept on one got into regions of impenetrable fog. This report was in line with the legend of the sticky water that Pytheas heard of in the North and that the ill-fated Sataspes reported in the tropics on his return to Persia from his failure to sail around Africa. In those days an explorer who got cold feet often excused himself later by saying his ship had stuck fast in some syrupy water.

Some geographers think that Himilco's weed-covered shallows were the Sargasso Sea, an elliptical patch between Florida and the west coast of Africa, about 1000 miles north-and-south and 2000 miles east-and-west, where floating sargassum weed is found most frequently. This weed, which grows along the Atlantic coasts of the Americas from Cape Cod to the Orinoco, breaks away from its attachment on the sea-shore and floats out to sea supported by its little gas-bladders. The broken pieces live for a long time in this condition, since they continue growing at one end while they decay at the other, and support a rich fauna of curious crabs and fish adapted to life in the weed. The stuff collects in the great eddy formed by the Gulf Stream and the North Equatorial Current, and drifts round and round for years until it finally sinks. A similar patch exists in the Indian Ocean.

Some odd ideas are current about the Sargasso Sea because in 1896 the novelist T. A. Janvier wrote a gripping novel, *In the Sargasso Sea,* in which he described the tract as an impenetrable tangle of weed holding fast the remains of ships of all ages from Spanish galleons down. Unfortunately this picturesque concept is not at all like the real Sargasso Sea, in which the weed is so thinly scattered that ships sail right through it without their passengers' knowing they have done so. The Bermudas, for instance, lie within the area of greatest density.

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Babcock surmised that some Phoenician crew had once penetrated the Sargasso Sea and, assuming that the floating weed was growing from the bottom as seaweed usually does, deduced that they were over a bank or shoal. Hence Himilco's report and Plato's Atlantean shallows. Not impossible, perhaps, but most unlikely in view of the small sea-keeping capacity of Classical ships. A Mediterranean trireme of Himilco's time was after all less than half the size of one of the big catamarans, misleadingly called "canoes," in which the Polynesians ranged the Pacific. And even if the Phoenicians had known the Azores, which is not certain, a Phoenician ship starting from these islands would have had to sail nearly a thousand miles in the teeth of the prevailing westerlies to reach the area of dense weed—an impossible feat for an ancient square-rigger with only one or two sails, no central rudder, and no compass to show the way when the sky was overcast.

More likely the whole shoals yarn was a Carthaginian cock-and-bull story intended to frighten away competitors. In any event it circulated widely in Greece, being adopted without qualms by Plato and Aristotle and mentioned by other writers.

And Tartessos? Nobody knows what happened to it, but after Himilco's voyage nothing further is heard of the city, and Himilco is suspected of having liquidated this competitor in the course of his voyage. Later geographers sometimes confused Tartessos with Gades, or with the little towns of Calpe and Carteia near Gibraltar.

Atlantis is even more strikingly like Tartessos than it is like Carthage or Crete; Tartessos, like Atlantis, lay in the Far West, beyond the Pillars; it was enormously rich, especially in minerals, and had wide commercial contacts with the Mediterranean; it was associated with shoals; behind it lay a great plain bordered by mountains; and it mysteriously disappeared. While the Tartessians are not known to have performed a bull-ceremony, the region was and still is a cattle country.

In the 1920's Professor Adolf Schulten of Erlangen, assisted by the archeologist Bonsor and the geologist Jessen, dug up the site of Tartessos. Besides the ring, Schulten found blocks of masonry which, he thought, showed the existence of two former cities, one dating from about 3000 and the other from about 1500 B.C. The high water-table prevented digging far down, and the investigators reluctantly concluded that the other remains of Tartessos had long since sunk deep in the mud of the Guadalquivir estuary.

Schulten also located the ruins of the Temple of Melkarth of Gades, on the little island of Santi Petri, with two wells mentioned by Polybios inside, recalling the springs in the Atlantean temple of Poseidon. Schulten's theory, popularized by Dr. Richard Hennig, was that all the necessary materials for Plato's story were right there in Spain.

About the same time Ellen M.

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Whishaw (widow of the archeologist Bernhard Whishaw, whom she succeeded as director of the Anglo-Spanish-American School of Archaeology) found relics in the same region that suggested to her a former great Hispano-African culture, the "Liby-Tartessian." She learned for instance that in the middle of the nineteenth century, "In a neolithic sepulchral cave, known as the Cave of the Bats, in the province of Granada, 12 skeletons were discovered, sitting in a circle round a central skeleton of a woman, dressed in a leather tunic. At the entrance of the cave were three more skeletons, one wearing a crown and dressed in a tunic of finely woven esparto grass. Beside the skeletons were hide bags containing carbonised food, and other bags filled with poppy heads, flowers and amulets; poppy heads were scattered all over the floor of the cave. Among a number of other objects were some little clay discs identified by archaeologists as necklace ornaments connected with the sun-cult, found in the land harbor of Niebla and in a building trench near Seville."

These skeletons were supposed to have been those of a royal family and their attendants who for some reason committed mass suicide by eating opium. Mrs. Whishaw cited other evidence for her Liby-Tartessian culture, such as a Neolithic cup found near Seville, decorated with a picture of a woman dressed like the one in the Cave of the Bats fighting two Libyan warriors; prehistoric Iberian graves; and modern Spanish customs pointing to an ancient matriarchal society like that of the Berbers. She argued that Tartessos was, not Atlantis itself as Schulten asserted, but a colony of Atlantis—Plato's Atlantis, sunken island and all. But, as we have seen, geology (a science of which Mrs. Whishaw admitted she knew nothing) bars that view.

One set of comparisons remains to tie this mass of speculation into a neat bundle—or as neat as the straggly nature of the material allows. That is the comparison between Plato's Atlantis and the historical Tartessos on one hand, and Scheria (pronounced "skerry-a"), the land of the Phaiakes or Phaeacians in Homer's *Odyssey*, on the other.

Before his arrival at Scheria, Homer's hero Odysseus had set forth from the isle of Ogygia, "at the very center" (literally "boss" or "navel") "of the sea," where for eight homesick but not uncompensated years he had been kept by the nymph Kalypso, a daughter of Atlas. When the gods finally forced Kalypso to let him go, he built a raft and set sail for "fertile Scheria, the land of the Phaiakes, near kin of the gods," supposedly twenty days' sail away.

Here we have some peculiar coincidences. The Greek word for the raft on which Odysseus wafted was *schedia*, supposedly of Phoenician origin, meaning either a raft or a pontoon bridge. Besides, there were at least two Phoenician colonies and trading-centers named Schedia, one on the north coast of the island of Rhodes, the other on the coast of

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Egypt near Alexandria. And the Phoenician word for market is *schera*. . . . The study of Atlantis is full of such coincidences, which might be very useful if they all pointed in one direction instead of in many.

Following Kalypso's directions to sail "with the Bear on his left," Odysseus made most of his journey without incident. But on the eighteenth day, with his goal in sight, he was spied by Poseidon returning from a feast among the Ethiopians. The Earth-Shaker, having it in for Odysseus for having blinded his son Polyphemos, wrecked the raft. Odysseus would have drowned had not the nymph Leukothea taken pity on him and lent him her veil as a magical life-preserver.

By strenuous swimming through a savage surf the Wanderer made "the mouth of a fair-flowing river." He quickly prayed to the river-god, who "stayed the stream, held back the wave and made it smooth before him, and brought him safely into the river's mouth." When the exhausted Odysseus had crawled out of the water and gotten his wind back, he cast Leukothea's veil into the water, and "a great wave bore it down the stream" to the nymph.

Interpreters of Homer have sought geographical clues in these passages as to the whereabouts of Scheria. Although the country is "in the sea," implying an island, the river indicates a large land mass. The water's reversal at the river-mouth *might* be a description of oceanic tides, which would locate Scheria outside the Mediterranean whose tides are measured in inches.

Homer then tells a little about the Phaiakes: how their King Nausithoös (a son of Poseidon) had led them from "spacious Hypereia near the overbearing Kyklopes" to their present site, "far from wheat-eating men." This makes little sense, since the only Hypereia known to history is a fountain in the town of Pherai, in southwestern Thessaly, near Iolkos of Argonautic fame, while the usual euhemeristic interpretation of the *Odyssey* identified Polyphemos with Mount Etna and the land of the Kyklopes therefore with Sicily.

At any rate, Nausithoös now was deceased, and

> With god-given wisdom Alkinoös reigned in his stead.

The day after Odysseus's escape from the sea, Athena inspired Alkinoös's daughter, the white-armed Nausikaä, to collect her handmaidens and drive the royal laundry-wagon down to the river to do the palace wash. After washing they amused themselves with a ball-game until their chatter awakened Odysseus. The Wanderer, holding a bush in front of his nakedness with un-Hellenic modesty, appealed for help to Nausikaä, who alone of the girls had not run at the sight of him.

The charming little princess called back her girls, lent Odysseus clothes, and told him to follow them into town. She explained that he was among the godlike Phaiakes, who "live farthest away on the loud-surging sea, and none else of mortals

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mingles with us." Their city had a lofty wall, a spacious harbor, a splendid temple of Poseidon, and a megalithic assembly-place. "For," she said, "the Phaiakes care not for bow or quiver, but for masts and oars and trim ships, with which they rejoice to cross the foaming sea."

Odysseus, much impressed by the bronze threshold of the palace of Alkinoös, its golden doors, silver doorposts, bronze walls, and golden statues of youths holding torches within, made his appeal to the king and was received with great hospitality. He learned that the Phaiakes' ships were "swift as the flight of a bird or even a thought"; that the Phaiakes were, like the Kyklopes, related to the gods; and that the farthest land they had visited was the island of Euboia off the east coast of Greece, whither they had once taken Rhadamanthos to visit his cousin Tityos. In Greek myth Rhadamanthos had been a brother of King Minos of Crete. Because of his integrity the gods had made him, after death, one of the judges of the dead and let him live in the Elysian Fields, which were, like Homer's Ogygia and the land of the Kimmerioi, somewhere in the Far West. The Phaiakes lived a luxurious life, fond of "the feast, the lyre, the dance, change of raiment, warm baths, and love."

Alkinoös, who seems to have been something of a jolly old souse, agreed to send Odysseus home. Next day he threw a fine party for the stranger, with athletic competitions, dancing, and the bard Demodokos singing lays of the lusts of the gods to his lyre. After the feast Odysseus was persuaded to tell his name and his adventures since leaving Troy. His tale, occupying Books IX to XII of the *Odyssey*, is the best-known part of the epic: how his fleet was first blown to Thrace where his men raided the Kikones but were beaten off; thence to the land of the Lotophagoi, the Lotus-eaters, in North Africa; thence to the land of the Kyklopes; to the floating island of Aiolos with its brazen wall; to the land of the cannibal Laistrygones; to Aiaia the island of Kirkë; to the land of the Kimmerioi on the banks of the river Okeanos, where Odysseus interviewed the ghosts of his comrades; past the Sirens' island and the Planktai or Clashing Rocks, through the strait of Skylla and Charybdis to the island of Thrinakia, where his men's slaughter of the Cattle of the Sun completed the ruin of the expedition, now reduced to a single ship. Odysseus ended his account clinging to a piece of his foundered ship and drifting to Kalypso's isle.

Next day Alkinoös sent Odysseus off in one of the Phaiakes' magic ships with rich presents. After a night's run faster than a hawk could fly, they set Odysseus ashore on his native Ithaka, where he duly took vengeance on Penelopeia's suitors. But Poseidon, already jealous of the impunity with which the Phaeacian ships crossed his sea, and furious at Odysseus's safe homecoming, turned the Phaeacian ship to stone as it entered its home port. Moreoever he

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announced his intention "to overshadow their city with a great mountain." To avert this last calamity the Phaiakes swore off their friendly custom of taking home any strangers who happened by their city.

Now, what is Scheria? It has been identified with almost as many places as Atlantis.

Apollodoros, Strabo, and other Classical writers thought that it was Corfu (also called Kerkya or Corcyra) the erstwhile summer home of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Some modern Homerists stick to this traditional view; the Scot Shewan, for instance, though it was Corfu with a Phoenician or Cretan population. Still, Corfu lacks tides and rivers and, so far from being "farthest away on the sounding sea," near the Elysian Fields, is actually in sight of Levkas, one of the group of islands that comprised Odysseus's domain. To bring Odysseus home from Corfu would hardly have needed a magical ship—unless, as Shewan thought, the Phaiakes were merely bragging when they told of their marine thaumaturgy.

Moreover Corfu has other claimants. Leaf thought it was Taphos, the realm of the King Mentes mentioned in the first book of the *Odyssey*, contrary to the usual belief that Taphos was the historical Taphios, a little island east of Levkas.

Others like Leutz-Spitta and Henning have proposed that Corfu was none other than Odysseus's Ithaka itself. Off the west coast of Greece, clustered around the entrance to the Gulf of Corinth, lies an archipelago of four large islands and many small ones. Nowadays the four large islands are called (reading from south to north) Zakynthos or Zante, Kephalenia or Cephalonia, Ithakë or Thiaki (the smallest of the four) and Levkas or Santa Maura. In Classical times they were called Zakynthos, Kephallenia, Ithakë, and Leukas or Leukadia respectively. (Remember the goddess Leukothea?) Now, Homer's Odysseus repeatedly refers to his realm as comprised of "Zakynthos, Doulichion, Samë, and Ithaka," and it would seem no great trick to fit these four names into the four islands in question.

It turns out, however, that Zakynthos is the only one we can be sure of. Kephallenia might be either Doulichion (whose description it answers) or Samë (since it has a town of that name) and conversely Levkas might be either Samë or Doulichion. Ithakë, despite its name, does not answer very well to the description Odysseus gave Alkinoös of his home island: "low-lying, farthest up in the sea towards the gloom, while the others are away towards the dawn and the sun." *Zophos*, "gloom" or "darkness," is here a poetical term meaning, probably, "west," but possibly "north" or even "northwest." And modern Ithakë lies right in the midst of the group. Furthermore it is described as *chthamale*, "low" or "flat," whereas Ithakë is a mass of rocky hills rising to 2645 feet.

In the last century Draheim and Dörpfeld suggested that Levkas was Homer's Ithaka. Others denied this,

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asserting that Levkas was not an island at all but a peninsula, since it is separated from the mainland only by a shallow ford. As if this fog of names were not opaque enough already, Homer also mentions the Kephallenians as subject to Odysseus, though without saying where they live. Perhaps we had better not get ourselves involved in this ancient argument, which has raged for 2400 years without settling the question. Maybe Homer, describing the islands from hearsay, got his geography a little mixed, confusing Ithakë, Levkas, and Corfu with one another.

Walter Leaf gave up the hunt for Scheria with the words: "No; if we take our measure from earthly maps, Corfu is not Scherie. But Scherie has its place in the map of poetry and fancy; and there I believe it can be identified. Is it not Homer's name for Plato's Atlantis? And if we want some connexion with the real world, let us think of the ingenious and attractive idea which finds in Atlantis a recollection of the lost glories of the Minoan empire, and consider whether the Phaeacians who, in Nausikaa's words, 'care not for bow and arrow, but only for masts and oars and ships,' may not fairly remind us of the men of Knossos, who, secure in the rule of the sea, never cared to fortify their palace by the shore?" But Crete makes a poor Scheria, since Scheria was well-fortified and Crete was celebrated for its archery. Moreover the *Odyssey* names Crete—in fact Odysseus mentions it to Alkinoös. (Likewise, although the Land of the Kyklopes was long held to be Sicily, the *Odyssey* also mentions Sicily under its old name of Sikania.)

Nor could Scheria be Carthage, since Carthage was only founded about the time the Homeric poems were taking shape. Some Homerists have even found Scheria in Palestine, Tunisia, Sicily, Gades, the Canary Islands, or the island of Socotra in the Arabian Sea. And some think it a fairyland, a pure creation of the imagination.

If Scheria be anything in the real world, which we shall probably never know, Tartessos would seem not unlikely: Tartessos the Silvery, as seen, not first-hand, but through a mist of rumors picked up from Phoenician seafarers who had been there by Greeks who had not. Tartessos lay in the right direction. Looking west from Greece it was "farthest away on the loud-surging sea"; it possessed the lavish metallic wealth attributed to Scheria—Polybios even said of a rich Iberian king that "he rivalled the luxury of the Phaikes." It lay at the mouth of a large river, on a coast beaten by a powerful surf and strong tides. Finally Scheria's threatened doom of being encircled by a high mountain suggests the actual fate of Tartessos in being stranded in the midst of great mudbanks built up by the silting of the Baetis; and, more remotely, the submergence of Atlantis.

Not that Scheria *is* Tartessos, except in the sense I discussed at the beginning of the chapter. Like Atlantis, Scheria is a literary creation,

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used as the background for a piece of imaginative fiction. Therefore its author, no sober historian, need not stick to strict facts. His literary land may be based on a combination of several real places further touched up by his poetic imagination.

And Plato, even if he had not heard much about Tartessos, could well have drawn upon the *Odyssey's* account of Alkinoös's palace for his gleaming metal-sheathed Atlantean citadel.

The most we can say, then, is that both Homer and Plato possibly used traditions and rumors of Tartessos in building their literary creations of Scheria and Atlantis. In addition, Homer and Plato may have used traditions relating to Crete, and Plato may have used both Homer's Scheria and the real Carthage as sources of inspiration. The exact truth, like much else in such matters, is probably lost beyond recovery.

Such being the case, could there, nevertheless, have been great fallen civilizations whose remains have not yet been discovered? Perhaps.

Europe has been combed over by archeologists to the point where sensational finds of high cultures seem unlikely. Future discoveries will probably take the form of filling in the gaps, as by finding more information on the Tartessian and Minoan cultures.

In the New World the rise of the Mayas, Aztecs, and Andean peoples from barbarism has been fairly well charted. Their histories may be extended back a few centuries, and new sites and colonies discovered, but we are most unlikely to find a whole new civilization preceding those already known.

In Africa likewise we know the general outlines in space and time of the great Egyptiac civilization, and also of the high Negro civilization that flourished in the western Sudan for a thousand years until destroyed by White invaders (Moroccans and Spaniards) in the seventeenth century. Although pseudo-scientists have long speculated about the mysterious fortifications at Zimbabwe in South Africa, archeology seems to indicate that they were built by native Bantu-speaking people as late as 1300 A.D. Australia, and the Pacific Islands before the Polynesian invasion, seem never to have had civilized cultures.

Asia, however, has hardly been scratched archeologically. A great Indus Valley civilization of Sumerian times has come to light in the last few decades, and further discoveries are quite possible. Perhaps we shall some day find an early semi-civilized Central Asiatic culture whence the Sumerian and Chinese civilizations sprang. In fact, cryptic tales of buried cities in the Caucasus and Russian Turkestan, and of a great pyramid in western China, have drifted out of Asia in recent years. If the Russian archeologists who have been digging up the wilder parts of the U. S. S. R. become less close-mouthed they may have exciting revelations to make. And even in a well-explored

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area like Iraq, archeologists have pushed the horizons of civilization back to 7000 years ago by the discovery of the oldest known farming villages at Qalat Jarmo and Hassuna.

Still, don't expect four-armed hermaphrodites, with astral bodies and airplanes. The people who built up these early cultures were much like ourselves: the men tending herds and crops, building houses, and making utensils; the women cooking, sewing, and baby-tending; the kings waging war, dispensing justice, and indulging their lusts. There was no prehistoric machine-age. Of the hundreds of thousands of archeological relics found since men started to hunt them, not one bronze-age flashlight or fountain-pen has turned up, nor is any likely to.

(Next Month: Part 9)

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By

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The THINKING CAP

By Robert Bloch

As a writer, Barnaby was a has-been until the red-head gave him the Thinking Cap and the advice "Never look a gift-horse in the mouth." But there are other old sayings about paying the piper and Greeks bearing gifts.

HE opened the cupboard door. An empty gin-bottle tilted forward and crashed to the floor. He ignored it, and groped inside the cupboard, his fingers scrabbling air. As he did so, he began to talk to himself. A nasty habit, but one he seemed to have acquired.

"But when she got there, the cupboard was bare, and so the poor dog had none. Poor dog. That's me, all right. Poor, poor dog." He paused. "Eureka!"

At the very end of the cupboard his hand encountered and closed around a can. He pulled it out and inspected the label. "Not Eureka after all. Beans. That's better. And so the poor dog had beans."

He put the can of beans on the table and switched on the little electric grill that rested on the washstand. He bent down, found a small pan—it wasn't really too dirty—and set it on the glowing grid.

"Can-opener," he muttered. "Can't open her without a can-opener. Canopius. Canopy. Canopy soup." He stood there for a moment and all the words rushed through his head, rushed in riot uncontrolled. "Soup. Super. Superman has found a can. Can he open? Open sesame. Sesame seed. Sesame seed something. Sesame seed a can of beans. Baked beans. Human beans. Norman. Bean — that's the name Edgar Rice Burroughs used at first. When he was still poor, and trying to get a break, and eating beans. Like me. Nobody likes me. Nobody loves me. I don't even have a can-opener."

Suddenly he stopped, and his voice sank to a whisper. He didn't know who he'd been talking to *before*, but now he was really talking to *himself*. And he whispered, very softly, "Look now, you've got to stop this. You've got to get hold of yourself. You don't want to go crazy, do you? Or do

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you?"

He abandoned the search for the can-opener and stepped over to the mirror. It didn't take him long. The whole room was only ten by fourteen, plus the closet. Grill, cupboard, washbowl, bed, two chairs, end-table with the cheap portable radio, and of course the card-table with the portable typewriter resting on it. That was the inventory; the inventory of the room's contents.

Now he stood in front of the mirror above the washbowl and took inventory of himself.

The long, thin face was even longer and thinner today. The cheeks seemed to be slightly sunken—where had he seen that particular conformation before?

The eyes were bright blue, but slightly glazed, and this phenomenon, too, was familiar.

His brown hair was plastered back on his forehead, and it lay dully and without lustre. Somehow, he recognized a similarity here, also.

His skin was pale. Waxy pale. He knew that pallor. It was somehow tied in with the sunken cheeks and the glazed eyes and the duly plastered hair, because it was associated with the look of a —

"Corpse!" he whispered. "You look like a corpse. You're dead. Dead, or dying. Got to do something. Got to."

Yes, he had to do something, but what? Drinking hadn't helped. And he couldn't drink any more, anyway, because the last of the money was gone. He couldn't get out of this dingy little furnished room, either—not until the end of the month. Then he'd be thrown out.

And worst of all, he couldn't write.

That was the crux of the problem. He couldn't write. The portable typewriter rested on the card-table. It rested. But he didn't rest. He couldn't rest. He couldn't rest because he couldn't write, and then he drank because he couldn't rest, and when he drank he couldn't write, either. Not writing led to drinking which led to not writing which led to—looking like a corpse. Becoming a corpse. If he didn't go mad first.

"Save me," he whispered to himself in the mirror. "Save me!" But the face staring back was impassive. The face knew all there was to know about him.

Barnaby Codd, aged 30. Occupation, writer. Status, single. Future, dubious. Or all too certain.

And the face knew the facts behind the facts. Knew about the seven years of work, the stories rejected, the stories sold, the brave beginnings and the bitter end. It knew about Peggy and the broken engagement—about the furnished apartment with its five rooms when the writing came easily. It knew about the cases of bonded whiskey when the stuff was selling to the better markets, and it knew about the empty bottle of the cheapest gin (going crazy, how can there be an *empty* bottle of cheapest anything?) when he hit the slump. When the slump hit him, which was now, now, now. When he couldn't rest, couldn't keep from drinking, couldn't start

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the writing. When he got into this horrible habit of talking to himself and his brain ran away with the words and the thoughts and left nothing but a morass of maudlin self-pity.

Barnaby Codd stared at himself in the mirror and himself stared back with the impassivity of death. He was calm, now. Calm as if in a coma. Coma, comma, Lake Como, Lake Perry Como, comme ci, comme sa, come wind, come rain, come hell or high-water, come Dunder and Blitzen and Prancer and Rudolph the Red-nosed Can-Opener. Damn it to hell, where was the can-opener, where was the magic key that opened the silver portals that led to the regal banquet of beans for His Majesty's pleasure?

It was very funny. No reason for him to cry. And yet he was crying, suddenly. The mirror was blurring, the room was beginning to spin, and there was a ringing in his ears.

"Telephone!" Mrs. Bixby, calling him. "Telephone, Mister Codd!"

Barnaby Codd rubbed his eyes, groped his way down the hall, answered the phone. "Hello . . . yes . . . yes . . . why, sure . . . yes, that would be fine . . . glad to . . . thanks."

He hung up. This was it, this was the reprieve, this was the last-minute call from the Governor as they strapped him into the chair.

He was going to a party. A cocktail party, with a buffet supper. There'd be food, food, food—lots of food. And there'd be drink, drink, drink—lots of drink. And people. People like Hank Olcott, who'd invited him. People who still thought of him as a creative talent, who would introduce him, with a certain flourish of pride; "This is my friend Barnaby Codd, the writer."

Yes, he still had a clean suit. And he could shave the hollow cheeks. He would go, and he would glow, and he could talk to others instead of to himself, and he could eat something better than beans and drink something better than cheap gin.

So Barnaby Codd washed and shaved and dressed and combed his hair. He turned off the electric grill. He picked up his hat and started for the door. Then he paused, turned back.

He went over to the wash-stand, grabbed up the can of baked beans, and hurled it into the waste-basket.

HANK OLCOTT led him across the room and introduced him with a certain flourish. "This is my friend, Barnaby Codd, the writer." He did it once, he did it twice, he did it half a dozen times.

Codd kept feeling better and better. All that food, all that liquor, all these people milling around. A chance to talk, to notice and be noticed. Everything was becoming quite *real* once more, and Codd felt very much alive.

There must be at least forty people in the apartment, he estimated—they kept arriving and departing; the elegant, the effete, the eccentric and the egocentric. Where Olcott picked them up he didn't know. He had some odd friends, Codd mused. He himself was

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a good example.

As time passed, the character of the crowd changed. Some strangers had appeared; apparently the word was going around. It was the old story. Olcott told his friends he was holding a party, and they told *their* friends, and *they* told their friends, acquaintances, even their enemies.

Hank Olcott wasn't introducing him to very many people now. He didn't know very many people in this crowd. Codd speculated about making his departure. He felt very good, quite self-assured. Better quit now while he was ahead. Another drink might be one too many. Another introduction might be boring. But—

Then he saw the crimson poppy.

It swayed on its long green stem, its scarlet petals unfurled. It stood in slender splendor near the far windows, and Codd felt irresistibly drawn to its aura. He bent his head as if to inhale the perfume of its presence.

"My name is Barnaby Codd," he whispered.

"I'm Cleo Fane," said the crimson poppy.

Codd stared at the sheathing green gown, at the flowing red hair. This was no poppy, but a far more exotic flower. Face of Grecian marble, eyes cut from Chinese jade—Codd checked himself abruptly. He was letting go again, he realized; all this business of flowers, sculpture, purple prose. She was the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen—wasn't that enough?

And she was staring up at him with something very much like admiration in her slanted oval eyes.

"Do you belong here?" she was asking.

"Belong here?"

"Do you know these people?"

"Why—yes. That is, I know Olcott, our host. Great patron of the arts, dilettante, really. That's how I got in. I'm a writer."

She nodded. "I know."

A warm glow came over Codd. He smiled. "What do you do?" he asked.

"I don't belong here."

"Then let's leave, shall we?"

She put her arm on his. "Very well."

And that's all there was to it. In one minute he'd met the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen and walked away with her.

Olcott was standing at the portable bar, surrounded by an assortment of longhairs and crewcuts, and Codd made no effort to bid him goodbye.

Instead he walked out, floated out, flew out into the night with the ravishing redhead. Ravishing —

"Won't you be my guest for a few moments?" she was asking. "I have a place. It isn't far."

Codd had difficulty in comprehending her invitation. It was just too good to be true. This was the way it happened in stories; the way it happened in some of the stories he used to write.

Elation combined with alcohol within him to produce a strange alchemy. He knew he was drunk, he knew he couldn't walk very well, he knew that he had only a blurred awareness of the street, of movement,

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of entering a tall building and being ushered into a large room. A dim lamp glowed in the corner. Codd smelt a perfume that might have been incense, might have been the woman who stood close beside him, sat close beside him now on the long, low divan.

And then she turned to him, and it was like the surge of the sea, the warm tide flowing over him and bearing him up on its crest, and all at once he could talk and the formless phrases and wild words made a certain sense.

". . . don't know how long I've been looking for someone like you . . . not someone *like* you, but *you,* though I never knew it . . . never thought anyone like you existed . . . never believed in Fate . . . or that Fate was a woman with red hair and green eyes and lips shaped as strange gateways to dreams . . ."

"What do you write?" She sat up suddenly, and her voice was almost crisp.

"Why — I — I —" Codd fumbled for reality. "What do I write? That's an odd question. I write many things. Poetry, and short stories, and there are two novels, half of a third— but that was over a year ago, when I stopped." He gulped, then took the plunge. "I'll be honest. I *was* a writer. But I can hardly claim to be one now. For a year I've been in a slump. Something happened to me, I don't know how to explain it. I can't write any more."

Cleo nodded, in private affirmation. "That's why I wanted to meet you. I knew you needed help."

"What do you mean?"

For answer, Cleo rose. She disappeared somewhere in the dimness of the room. Codd sat there, wondering and waiting. He felt quite drunk, now. Things were happening too quickly, and he had no way of evaluating the reality of events. On one level, it seemed like years since he'd been crying in front of the washstand mirror. On another, no time had elapsed at all.

Then Cleo was back. She was holding something in her hand, but the hand was below the level of the divan and Codd couldn't see anything from where he sat.

"This writing problem," she said. "Would you say you had established some sort of mental bloc?"

Codd sat up stiffly. "Say, what is this—are you a lady psychiatrist?"

Cleo laughed, a soft laugh of darkness and musk. "No. But I understand something about creation and its problems." Her voice became a persuasive purr. "I want to help you, you know."

"I know. And I'm trying to answer honestly. I just can't seem to function, as a writer any more. I can't seem to grasp ideas properly, coherently. Everything flies apart into words, phrases, sentences. There's nothing consistent or coherent—I can't seem to concentrate." Codd's voice sunk to a whisper. "Sometimes, lately, I wonder if I'm losing my mind."

"Losing your mind." Cleo smiled a smile of her own. "Odd that you

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should use that particular phrase."

"Why is it odd?"

"Have you ever stopped to think of what it means, what image it conveys? If you *lose* your mind, that indicates it has been mislaid—that it's *somewhere else*. Where is your mind now, Mr. Barnaby Codd?"

"Lost in flames," Codd whispered, as intoxication flooded over him again. "Lost in the flames of your hair and your eyes and your lips and —"

"Not now." She pushed him away. "This is important. To you. To me. And to someone else."

"Someone else?"

"Of course. I'm only what you might call an emissary. An agent. I couldn't invent something like this."

The hand came up from below the divan's level, now. It came up in all its shining silver slimness, holding the odd-looking object.

"What in the world—or out of the world—is that?" Codd breathed.

"What does it look like?"

"Well, I'd say it was some kind of headdress, or helmet."

"You're correct. It is meant to be worn on the head."

"And those antennae, with the coiled tubing between them—make me think of television, and space-pilots, and all that kid stuff."

"Let me assure you there is nothing childish about this invention. As you will soon learn, to your profit."

"I still don't understand."

"You will. I was directed to go out and find a subject for the experiment. A creative artist—painter, sculptor, musician, writer. Someone possessing a sensitive imagination, but unchanneled, undisciplined. To be blunt, an unsuccessful creative artist. A successful artist, in any field, wouldn't want or need to wear the helmet. You will."

"You mean, somebody invented this and wants me to put it on my head?"

"Exactly."

"Now, wait a minute." Codd was suddenly quite sober. "This doesn't make sense. I may be going crazy, but I'm not *that* crazy. A beautiful woman comes to me and asks me to wear a Buck Rogers helmet invented by some mysterious screwball, and I'm supposed to go along with the gag."

"This is serious. You cannot begin to imagine just how serious. However, I am beginning to see I made a mistake. Yours is not the temperament I had judged it to be. I think you had better leave, now."

Cleo stood up, moved away. And every inch of retreat was agony to Codd, every movement of withdrawal was poignant with pain. He couldn't lose her, he'd do anything, anything—

"Wait! Perhaps if you'd explain to me what this is all about, what the helmet is supposed to do, I'd understand."

"No. You are not the man I want."

"Please!" He was frankly begging her now. "I'll do anything you ask, anything."

She smiled and came closer. "That's better. Much, much better."

She held out the helmet. "Here,

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put it on."

"Now?"

"Exactly."

He held it in his hand. The metal was cool, but oddly light and malleable. In the dim light he could not discern the nature of the coiled tubing or the antennae to which it was attached.

"What—what am I supposed to do when I wear it?"

"You'll understand everything. Just put it on." Her smile was mocking, now. "What's the matter? Afraid I'm going to harm you?"

It was the proper challenge for the moment. Barnaby Codd lifted the helmet. He placed it on his head firmly—Napoleon grasping the coronet from the Pope and crowning himself emperor. The helmet fitted snugly over his skull. At the point where the two antennae were based, something began to bore into his brain.

He stared ahead for a moment, looking at Cleo. Her face was rapt, her eyes closed. He had the oddest sensation that her eyes were in the antennae, that the antennae were in his brain, that his brain was in another world. He stared at her hair, and the flames leapt up, and Barnaby Codd drowned in their fire.

Then he didn't feel the helmet, didn't see her any more. He was in another world . . .

THE sky was green.

The moons were green, too—and there were three of them. The trees and grass and rocks were green. In the distance the green lake rippled, and Codd could see the curious emerald reflection coursing across it.

He gazed up at the source of the reflection and perceived the green girl riding the green dog. The dog was something like a poodle, with enormously exaggerated ears. But then, everything about the dog was enormously exaggerated—it must have been five feet high and fifteen feet long. The dog wore one of the curious helmets, too, and it bounded in twenty-foot leaps across the greensward.

Riding on the dog's back was a green girl. A helmet rested on her green curls, and her green eyes glittered lividly. Yes, she had green curls—but she was Cleo!

Codd stared. That was all he could do; simply stare. He wanted to move towards her, wanted to cry out, but he couldn't He willed his feet to move. Nothing happened.

Then he glanced down and saw the answer. He had no feet. He had no feet, no legs, no torso, no arms, nothing. He was wearing the helmet but he had no head. He could see, but he had no eyes.

There was nothing to do but watch and wait—watch and wait as the green girl bounded past on the green dog. Then the rocket roared across the green sky, and Codd blinked. *Codd* blinked; his eyes didn't, for he had none.

The rocket was not green. It was silver, and an orange jet blasted behind it. If the rocket was not green, that meant it was not of this world. It came from somewhere else. It

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swooped across the horizon, disappeared. Then, abruptly, it reappeared over the lake. It was lower, now, ready to make a landing.

Codd wanted to be close to it when it landed.

Abruptly, he *was* closer. He watched the landing, watched the men emerge.

Cleo and the dog had disappeared. There were only the men, now: the earthmen of the future on a strange green planet. He found that he could *will* himself to move closer or away at will; they could not see him although he could see them. He found that he could hear them, too, faintly or plainly as he desired. The sensation was similar to that of watching a motion picture and photographing it simultaneously; choosing the camera angles he wished.

And during the next hour, he saw the picture unreel. The planet was explored by the rocket ship's crew. The captain and the three leading crew-members enacted a private drama of their own. The crew was going mad. It was the color that did it—the effort of adjusting to a world where everything was green. They mutinied. They tried to steal the ship. The captain alone did not crack. He fought them off. They succumbed, one by one, to the green lure of the lake, to the call of the green jungle, to the green death of the swamp. It was, in a way, an absorbing psychological study—the unpredictable effect of subjecting a normal mind and a normal pair of eyes to a single, unvarying constant color.

The last crew member died in a crazy attempt to paint the rocket ship green. He succeeded—and failed, for the captain shot him.

And now the captain was alone. Alone, and sane, for he wouldn't yield to his environment. He was stronger than the planet, stronger than the mysterious force of chlorophyll or radiation or combination of both that made everything on its surface conform to its greenness.

His will did not break, his mind did not give way. He prepared to return to earth alone. It was only when he reached the end of his ordeal and found the safety of his cabin that he stared in the mirror—and saw that he had turned green.

The film ended there. Or rather, the green came up. Codd felt himself falling away from it, falling into greenness, falling into blackness, falling into redness . . .

Her hair, covering his face. And her voice whispering, "Wake up, now. Wake up. I've taken it off."

He was awake, and she *had* taken off the helmet. He sat there, dazed, and she handed him a drink. Outside the windows a false dawn paled, then was blotted out in final darkness.

"What happened?" he whispered.

"You tell me," she suggested. "*You* wore the helmet."

Barnaby Codd told her. She nodded from time to time, nodded thoughtfully.

"But I don't understand it at all," he concluded. "You were in the dream, and there was a dog, and a space ship, and everything was green,

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yet it made a story."

"That's the whole point," said Cleo. "The experiment was successful, because it made a story. Do you think you could write that story, now, and sell it?"

Codd stodd up. "Why—yes, I guess so. I've never tried anything in science-fiction or fantasy before, but the market is there. And this psychological angle, about the effects of color, would work in."

"Then why don't you do it?" the woman suggested.

"Because I've got to know what happened, first. I've got to understand this thing. Where did the story come from?"

"From your own mind, of course," Cleo told him. "The helmet merely organized the various subconscious images in a coherent form. I don't pretend to know the mechanism—but the helmet integrates thought patterns. Some of the elements you observed are simple enough to figure out."

"Such as?"

"Well, myself, for example. I belonged in the prelude to the story because I was 'on your mind,' you might say. And the dog—" she hesitated.

"Go on," he prompted.

"The dog was probably a symbol of yourself. You *have* felt like a dog lately, even told yourself that you were a 'dog,' haven't you?"

Codd smiled. "Tell me more."

"The rocket-ship? Well, you spoke of the helmet as if it was a science-fiction gadget. Pure association there."

Codd nodded. "And the color green?"

Cleo sighed. "I must admit to a little cheating, there. I had to do something that would help me check. So while you wore the helmet and stared off into nothingness—"

"Is that what I did all that time?" Codd interrupted.

"Yes. You just sat in a trance, eyes open, until it was over. And while you stared, I held this in front of your eyes."

The girl extended her hand and Codd stared at the jewel blazing up at him. An emerald, of course.

"Then it's all a matter of suggestion, of self-hypnosis?"

"Perhaps. But the helmet is the agent. You wear it and your thoughts weave a pattern. It will help you to create. You speak of losing your mind. The helmet permits you to find it again."

"But how does it work?"

"I cannot answer that. And you must not question me too closely. This much, and this much only need you know. I am empowered to offer you the loan of the helmet for an indefinite period, for experimental purposes.

"You can wear it whenever you want, write whatever you want as a result of your experiences while wearing it. I believe you are going to find this a most profitable undertaking."

"And what do you—and your mysterious inventor friend—get for this privilege?"

"Merely the opportunity to test the helmet and observe its effects.

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The record of effects will be found in the stories you write."

"But where's the catch?"

"There is no catch. Perhaps, some day, we will want you to go on record as to the way in which the helmet performs. We may patent and market it on a wide scale. We may find other uses for it. I cannot say at present."

Codd paced the floor. "I don't know. It sounds crazy."

"Can you sell the story?"

"Certainly."

"Then remember this—you'll write other stories. Tonight your mind was at singularly low ebb; you were confused, half-drunk. What do you suppose you'll be capable of once you're clearly confident, once you begin to organize your talent and utilize all your creativity with the helmet's aid? Why, you'll be able to turn out best-sellers! You'll be rich, famous, perhaps immortal. Wouldn't you like that?"

Wouldn't he? An abrupt vision of the frowsy furnished room came unbidden to his brain. Codd nodded. Of course he wanted to be rich and famous. And what had he to lose, what had he to fear?

"Suppose I accept," he said. "Are there any restrictions?"

"None. Of course, you will keep this secret. You'll have to, at first—you know as well as I do what people would say if you came to them with such a fantastic explanation."

"Agreed," said Codd.

"And you are further instructed not to tamper with the helmet in any way. If you have any notion of running off to some scientific testing laboratory and discovering the 'secret' of its mechanism, I can assure you that the attempt will end in disaster. You'll end up with a damaged, useless instrument—and know nothing. Because today's science does not operate in a frame of reference sufficient to make this phenomenon intelligible to mankind." She smiled. "But I become ponderous. All I mean to do is to use that old phrase—what is it again?—'Never look a gift-horse in the mouth.'"

She extended the helmet. Codd grasped it, moved towards the door.

"And when do I see you again?" he asked.

"Soon. Quite soon." Cleo Fane smiled. "I'll see you in my dreams."

BARNABY CODD wrote *The Green Planet* as a novelette, in three sittings. He sold it, first trip out, for three hundred dollars. It was printed, and successfully received, four months later, and the editor asked for more. The editor had illustrated it with a cover showing four or five colors instead of just green, but nobody seemed upset about that. Codd wasn't upset either, because by the time the story appeared he was already out of the science-fiction field.

He was out of the furnished room, too, and established in a pleasant apartment once more. The actual mechanics of locating a new place and furnishing it proved tiresome—but then, for several weeks after writing the story, everything was tiring to

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Codd. He felt oddly drained and depleted of energy.

Yet he had energy enough to make an effort to locate Cleo Fane. He tried the phone-book, of course, and to no avail. Then he consulted the city directory and drew a blank. So he went to Hank Olcott.

"Cleo Fane?" Hank considered for a moment. "No, can't say that I recognize the name." He tapped a cigarette and leaned back. "Should I?"

"Well, she was at your party," Codd persisted. "Surely you remember her—tall redhead in a green dress."

Hank shook his head slowly. "Sorry. I don't recall seeing her. Of course, there were so many strangers barging in and out all night long. I can ask some of the gang."

"I wish you would," Codd urged. "I must find her."

Hank Olcott chuckled. "I thought you told me you went out together. Don't you know where she lives?"

Codd tried to explain. He didn't know, he'd had too much to drink, he'd tried to retrace his steps and couldn't find the building on the side street. Olcott listened patiently, promised to make inquiries, and did so. But he learned nothing.

Nor did Codd, in the days that followed. He sat at home, waiting for a call that never came. He might have had a few drinks to pass the time, but he found he no longer wanted to drink. He might have turned to the typewriter and done some work, but he found that he couldn't work. In that respect his status was unchanged —he was still in a writer's slump. The novelette had been an accident, after all.

But it wasn't an accident. It was merely the result of wearing the helmet. The helmet gave him the story. Why not use it now? Besides, what had she told him at the last?

"I'll see you in my dreams."

Codd took the helmet out of its place of concealment, at the bottom of his suitcase. He cradled it, examining it curiously. The light, malleable metal was silver, and its surface held the tarnish of age. The peculiar antennae and tubular filament between defied his analysis. This apparatus had not been sewed or rivetted or soldered on—it seemed to be an inherent part of the whole. How the helmet was made or what process had been used in its contrivance it was beyond his power to determine. It was all a mystery.

And so was its power, and so was the woman, and so was her power over him—mystery.

Codd sighed. He switched off the lamp, sat in darkness. The helmet gave off a faint phosphorescent glow. He raised it to his face, then placed it on his head. The phosphorescent glow flooded the room, flooded his brain and being.

Codd was back on the green planet, now. He stood against the hillside and stared down. Cleo came bounding past, on the back of a gigantic wolf. The wolf looked up at him and howled. Cleo waved, once—at least, he thought she waved. Then she disappeared.

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And now, oddly, the planet disappeared. Codd was somewhere else; in a modern city. He was watching another story unfold.

This was the story of David Harris, a man on the ragged edge of sanity. Codd knew the man, knew his thoughts, because he found he could get *inside* the man and read his mind. Not that alone; to a certain extent he could *be* the man if he so desired.

He watched Harris, discharged from the asylum, roaming through the city and seeking companionship, seeking a friend to save him from loneliness. For loneliness was the source of his aberration, being alone would drive him mad once more. He followed Harris through the drabness of his days, the empty impersonality of his contacts in a strange city. He suffered all the defeats which Harris met in his efforts to establish even a small acquaintanceship with his fellow men. He fought, as Harris fought, the terrifying hatreds that welled up in him; hatreds directed against all living things. He tried to conquer the delusion that all men were his enemies.

And he followed Harris to the tavern the night he met the girl. The girl was Cleo, of course—but this time she was a blonde, and he discovered she was a waitress out of a job and down on her luck. She was lonely, too. Then Harris took her to his room, and they spent the night, and Harris made the discovery of communication; of freedom from loneliness and fear. It seemed to Harris that this was too much to bear, that his mind would burst with the realization of his love, that his love was a torment worse than loneliness, that by losing himself in love he lost his identity which was that of a man to whom all men were enemies.

As Harris, he slept, and awoke in the morning to find the girl gone. Then he followed Harris through the streets, followed him in his search for the girl who had become to him the symbol of salvation. He must find her now or go mad forever. And he searched and he searched, and his panic grew, and he knew that he was on the borderline, on the ragged edge, and he couldn't endure it without her. And he tried to think back to last night and couldn't, and the hatred came welling up in him again, and he went back to his room and then he sensed her presence there.

The mere thought of her presence was enough to save him; he realized now, for the first time, how close he had come to the brink last night when he'd met her. It had only been a matter of hours, or perhaps even minutes, before he would have cracked, if he hadn't found her. No wonder he'd blacked out there at the last as they made love.

But now her presence was strong, she was with him, somehow, and he knew she would be with him always. He'd done something— he couldn't remember what it was, just now— to insure that. He'd done something to save himself by keeping her with him forever.

Harris couldn't remember. Not until he decided to go out, and went

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to the closet and opened the door, and found her propped stiffly in the corner with his knife in her throat . . .

Then Harris went mad, phosphorescently mad; and Codd got out of him quickly, got out of the phosphorescence and ripped off the helmet.

He sat there panting in the dark for a long moment before he was able to stand up, switch on the light, and walk over to the typewriter.

That night he wrote *The Ragged Edge* in one sitting.

DURING the next three months, Barnaby Codd wrote nine short stories and two novelettes. Both of the novelettes and the last six stories sold to the slicks, and Codd acquired a bright, brisk agent named Freeman who negotiated a motion picture sale for one of the novelettes and sold TV rights to three of the stories. He kept urging Codd to tackle a novel now, and talked about "deals" and "percentages" and "building up a name while things are hot."

Things were hot, all right. Too hot. Codd had new furniture and a new car. He had a bank balance of over seven thousand dollars. He was in a position to satisfy his gregarious instincts and aggrandize his ego. There was no need to wait for a phone-call from the Hank Olcotts of this world —he could give his own parties whenever he chose.

He tried it, once. The party was not a success. Oh, Hank came and the rest of the crowd came, and they seemed to have a good time. They complimented him, and joined with Freeman in marveling over his sudden, unprecedented success. But Codd didn't enjoy himself. He kept waiting for a scarlet poppy to blossom in the corner—and of course, it didn't.

Then he tried to drink, and found he hadn't the taste for it any longer. Nor the energy. The party tired him. He was glad when they all went away, finally, and he could turn out the lights and put on the helmet.

Because when he put on the helmet, she came. She always came, and always in the same way. He'd find himself back on the green planet under the three green moons. An instant of waiting, and then she'd bound across the landscape on an animal. Each time the animal was different—a lion, tiger, stallion, boar. Each time the action was the same—the creature bounded, she waved, then disappeared. And he'd be off in a dream-plot. The plots inevitably were a product of some previous reality; twisted, inverted, expanded and projected. *The Ragged Edge* had been the result of his own search for Cleo. Other plots had been remotely based on subsequent daily incidents in his life.

Tonight, his dream concerned a party—a charity ball. Cleo was there (odd, she seemed to turn up in disguise as a character, regularly) and this time she was a brunette. A reigning movie queen, internationally famous, a symbol of scandal and sophistication.

There was a raffle, and she danced with the holders of the winning tick-

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ets. Codd knew the winners—he *became* the winners, each in turn. And he followed their lives.

He was Homer Johnson; meek little bespectacled Homer Johnson, the bookkeeper with the nagging wife. And as a result of his moment of glory, his dance with a dream, he found the courage to leave his wife, tell off his boss, and go on to his romantically-cherished ambition of life in the merchant marine. The dance made him a hero.

He was young Derek; Derek, the fortunate. Blond, handsome rich man's son, with an assured future and a girl who worshipped him. But he danced with a dream and thereafter the girl meant nothing to him, and no woman was good enough. He went down, down, to an inevitable end. The dance destroyed him.

He was Geoffrey Farr, a once great name on the legitimate stage and now an extra voice, a bit character actor in soap-operas. He'd wangled his invitation, taken his last five dollars to buy a raffle ticket because he couldn't afford to be shamed in front of the "public." And he'd won a dance, too; won it in his rented tuxedo, danced with splitting seams, danced with a tearing pain in his chest—because he was old, too old for the constant strain of "keeping up appearances" and too old for the excitement.

The star had been nice to him when they danced, and some LIFE photographer had remembered his name and taken a shot on the off-chance that this was a good "human interest angle" to play up. And the ballroom buzzed.

Before the night was over, Geoffrey Farr had been "re-discovered" by two agents, a producer casting a Broadway show, and the star's personal director. There would be contracts in the morning and Geoffrey Farr would be back on top again.

Before the night was over, Geoffrey Farr died of a heart attack, brought on by the strain and the excitement. He had danced with a dream and the dream was death.

Codd died, took off the helmet, and began to set down the complete outline of *The Dancers*. It was going to be quite a novel—some of the touches were pure corn, he realized, but the kind of corn that sells. The kind that logically lends itself to rental library circulation, to mass motion picture audience appeal. "A" corn. He had the angle, now. A sort of combination of *Grand Hotel* and *Letter to Three Wives*.

He could write it in a month, he knew that.

And he did.

Freeman was enthusiastic when he saw the finished manuscript. "This is it!" he kept crowing "I knew you'd do it, Barnaby. You've been getting further and further away from all that morbid fantasy stuff. Now you've got the commercial angle. I'm going to get busy on this tomorrow. Don't worry about a thing. I'd suggest you go home and take a good long rest. You look tired, man. This job must have knocked you out."

Codd drove home. The new car

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handled perfectly, but driving was an effort. Everything had been an effort during the past month. He hadn't worn the helmet while writing, but the effects were there. Aside from work, he moved in a daze. Action and reaction were oddly altered. Of course, that often happened when he was working on a story—the story became more real than the external world. But even the story hadn't seemed real.

The dreams were real.

That was the way he'd felt. The dreams were real. The rest was ephemeral, unimportant. Only the dream-world existed. Cleo had been the bait to get him to wear the helmet. The stories and the success were the bait that kept him wearing the helmet. Somebody or something wanted him to do that, and it was real.

Codd went up to the apartment. He realized that he was in a bad state, and realized—sensibly enough—that he was letting his mind run away. Freeman was right; he was just tired from overwork.

Well, he didn't have to work that hard any more. Somehow he knew he had a winner; Freeman confirmed it. He'd sell the novel, get a decent motion picture sale, and take things easy. After all, he was a writer in his own right—he didn't have to depend on the helmet. The whole thing was beginning to prey on his mind; guilty secrets, and all that sort of rot. From now on it might be a good idea to forget about everything that had gone before.

Cleo, whoever she was, had disappeared. Nobody knew about the helmet. Nobody had come to blackmail him or accuse him or threaten him. Why not call the whole thing off and start all over, start fresh, as his own man?

His own man. . .

Barnaby Codd stood in front of the mirror and took inventory of himself. The Brooks Brothers suit was immaculate. The Sulka tie had a certain subdued resplendence. But the long, lean face was thin, the cheeks were sunken, the brown hair was lustreless, the skin was waxy pale, and the glazed eyes held the glitter of horrified recognition.

Nothing had changed. He was still a walking corpse.

And if he could still walk, it was time for the head-shrinker.

IT was very comfortable on the leather couch.

Sometimes it's nice to be a corpse, to be laid out in state with hands folded peacefully over the chest, eyes open and unseeing, ready for eternal rest.

When you accept death, nothing else matters any more, and it's easier to talk. So much, much easier.

Barnaby Codd told Doctor Fine all about this feeling. It was not difficult to talk to the quiet little psychologist. Olcott had recommended him; seemed to think it was a good idea. And it was a good idea, so far.

Fine was willing to dispense with all the preliminaries, to take Codd's word for it that he understood his

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problem. And with that encouragement, Codd talked.

He'd been talking now for almost an hour. He told the whole story—about the writing, and meeting Cleo Fane, and the curious aftermath to that evening. He told about the helmet and the dreams. He held nothing back.

Doctor Fine listened attentively, patiently. Codd felt a growing conviction that he could be helped here, that Doctor Fine knew the answers.

He concluded on a hopeful note. "What do you think? What does it all mean to you, Doctor?"

Codd sat up and fished for a cigarette. Little Doctor Fine sat back and smiled. "It doesn't matter, really, what it means to me. The important question is—what does it mean to you? How would you explain it?"

"I—I can't explain it."

"Then, make a guess."

"Are you serious?"

"Naturally. Are you? Then make a guess."

"Well." Codd lit the cigarette and sought significant symbolism in a spiral of smoke. "One theory would be that when I went to the party, I was already cracking up. Alcohol worked upon me auto-suggestively." He paused.

"Go on. This is interesting."

"I remember that Olcott never saw this woman. His friends don't seem to know her. So perhaps there was no woman — perhaps I imagined the whole thing; manufactured a stimulus, an excuse to continue writing. You might say that I hypnotized myself."

The Doctor nodded. "It's theoretically possible," he conceded.

"Except for one thing." Codd stood up, walked over to the coat-rack, fished in the pocket of his overcoat. "She gave me the helmet. Here it is."

He extended the curious metallic headpiece and Doctor Fine inspected it carefully.

"You couldn't make it yourself," he mused. "I don't suppose —"

"I don't suppose, either," Codd answered. "Supposition won't help me. And I suspect that no laboratory on earth could accurately analyze the component structure of a magic helmet. She warned me against trying to find out—I'm wondering now whether or not it might be a good idea to at least make the attempt. At least it could help convince me of my own sanity."

Doctor Fine gazed at the antennae, at the coils, at the odd patina of the silver. "If you'll permit me, I'd be glad to have it examined for you," he said. "But before you resign yourself to believing in the power of the helmet, why not think this thing through a little further?"

Codd finished his cigarette, crushed it out. "All right. Let's take the other tack. Cleo Fane exists. I did see her. She did give me this helmet, for her own mysterious purposes. And the helmet —"

"Ignore the helmet," Doctor Fine suggested. "Suppose the helmet was, and is, just a costume-piece. What then?"

"But I had the dreams," Codd ob-

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jected. "I had the first dream there in her apartment. And when I woke up, she was still there, with the emerald. She seemed to be in the dream and to know all about it —"

"Think!" insisted Doctor Fine. "What could that mean?"

"It could mean—it could mean that I didn't hypnotize myself—that I did dream—but that *she* hypnotized me. Darkness and quiet and fatigue and alcohol and suggestion. She made me believe that I'd dream when I put the helmet on. And then she used the emerald as a focal point. No wonder she knew my dream—she was planting it in my mind, telling me what I was dreaming all the time!"

Doctor Fine purred like a plump little cat. The canary had gone down nicely, it seemed. But —

"Wait!" exclaimed Codd. "That wouldn't work, either. Because I dreamed again. And again. Whenever I wore the helmet, I had a dream. She wasn't present to suggest anything, not once. And so —"

"Did you ever hear of post-hypnotic suggestion?" asked the Doctor.

"I get it! She did it all at the one sitting—told me that from that time on, whenever I wore the helmet, I'd dream. Perhaps planted the whole series in my subconscious. From that time on the helmet itself was the focal agent for hypnosis. And it's still working!"

From the sound of the deep purr, the Doctor had found another canary.

"Two more questions, Doctor. It's clearer to me now, and I feel better once I realize there are other explanations than crazy, supernatural ones. But two questions have to be answered. The first is —"

"Why should anyone attempt such a thing?" Doctor Fine was creeping up on his third canary, and he couldn't wait. "Because, unfortunately, you are not alone in the need for analytical therapy, my friend. The world is full of disorganized personalities. Your Cleo Fane, with her calculated air of mystery, her fabricated helmet and fabricated story, may well be acting compulsively and dramatizing her own private fantasies of power. She was 'looking for a creative artist,' she told you. An instrument of masculinity, perhaps, a surrogate for —"

Then followed five minutes of abstruse terminology, all of which added up, reassuringly, to the fact that Cleo Fane was nuttier than a fruitcake. It was good-therapy for Barnaby Codd—to be told that *she* was the crazy one, not he.

But there was still a second question. He asked it, now.

"How can I get rid of the dreams?" he pleaded. "How do I escape from this posthypnotic suggestion business?"

Doctor Fine smiled. "You're already more than half-free now," he said. "Just analyzing matters this way is a great step forward. You'll see. The final step is simple. It merely lies in re-evaluating the helmet."

"Yes?"

"Realizing, objectively and subjectively, completely, that it's all a trick. That the helmet in itself has

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no magical power over your mind. The next time you wear it, you'll not wait for the dream to end. You'll take it off, of your own volition, right in the middle of the so-called dream sequence. And that will be that. Simple." He smiled. "Then, if you still want to, we'll have the gadget examined and come up with answers. Chances are, it was manufactured somewhere in New Jersey. We can attend to all that later this week."

"But, wait a minute—I can't take the helmet off in the middle of a dream! She warned me, she wouldn't let me, I'm not able to command my actions when I wear it —"

Doctor Fine listened to him, and from the expression on his face it was plain he was hearing the chirps of the fourth canary. He smiled cheerfully.

"Of course you can take the helmet off," he said. "It's all a matter of suggestion. Of counter-hypnosis, if you wish. Now if you'll just stretch out on the couch once more, I think I can promise you that next time you'll be able to remove the helmet." He hummed. "It's all a matter of suggestion."

It was.

CODD didn't feel like a corpse any more. Corpses don't have six months of solid booking with psychoanalysts. They don't have the hopeful feeling that their problems are all on their way to being solved, that they are about to be helped, to get rid of their delusions, and can walk unaided on their own feet, on a path of their own choosing.

Codd had these feelings strongly, now. It was all so simple. The Doctor would cure him of his bloc against writing, would enable him to summon new strength and resolution instead of depending on suggestion and a weird belief in "magic."

Back at the apartment he looked at himself in the mirror once again, and that was the clincher. He was smiling, self-possessed, and there was some color in his cheeks. He was Barnaby Codd—not the old Codd, but the new Codd. The successful Codd. The Codd who had just written a novel which might well be a best-seller. The Codd who was going to have all the things he'd ever dreamed of having. The Codd who could—and it wasn't at all unthinkable now—write masterpieces.

The phone rang. He groped for it in the gathering dusk.

"Codd? This is Freeman. Got news for you. It looks like we've hit the jackpot." Codd listened, nodded at the mouthpiece. The book had sold. Freeman named the publisher, named the advance. One of the big book clubs was reading the carbon of the manuscript. The second carbon had been requested by the New York office of a major movie studio. Codd must appear at Freeman's office tomorrow morning and go through the pleasant motions of signing contracts.

Codd made the usual elated answers and hung up. He floated over to a chair in the dusk of the parlor.

This was it. This was real living. And only the beginning. From now

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on he'd enjoy it as a whole man, as his own master. He would break this foolish fixation, this morbid dependency on a crazy girl and her crazy story. His conscious mind was already free. And once he removed the helmet during a dream, his subconscious resolution would be made, thanks to Doctor Fine and the powers of suggestion. The powers of suggestion—fight fire with fire—science was wonderful—what a romantic, melodramatic fool he had been—now was the time to end it.

Yes, now was the time to end it. Get it over with. He couldn't wait, shouldn't wait. Perhaps that was Doctor Fine's hypnotic command, too. That he should don the helmet at once and go through with the traumatic incident.

At any rate, the urge was strong. The urge was overpowering, irresistible. Codd got the helmet from his coat. He felt the coolness against his palms. He felt the coolness against his skull as he sat back on the sofa and adjusted the helmet. It fitted snugly.

And that was all.

It just rested on his head. Nothing happened. Doctor Fine was right—perhaps he'd done a better job than he'd dared hope to do. Already the power of the helmet was gone. Codd didn't believe in it. He was his own man. He wasn't in the power of the helmet, in the power of Cleo Fane. He wasn't her man. He wasn't her man. He wasn't —

Codd fell asleep naturally. His head slipped down and he dozed. The phosphorescence was coming, now, and the familiar sense of seeing without being, of moving without body.

He waited for the three moons to appear. Strange, now that he had visited Doctor Fine, how he could analyze what was happening. That green planet had become not only familiar to him but natural, accepted. It had truly seemed more real to him than actual surroundings in his waking state. And the inevitable prelude to his visions—Cleo riding across the green landscape on a strange beast—that was accepted and expected too. He expected it now, but he wouldn't accept it this time. Only a dream.

Oddly enough, this time there was no green planet and no glimpse of Cleo riding an animal. He was somewhere else. He was many places else, at many times. He was in her mind, or she was in his.

A glimpse of her face, looming out of the sky, blotting out the horizon with the blinding redness of her hair. And her voice whispering.

"You tried to disobey. You weren't content with my gifts, so you tried to disobey. Didn't I give you enough? You wanted the ability to create, you wanted the rewards of creation. I gave them to you freely. Was that, then, not enough?"

It was a question, but he did not answer. She knew the answer. She knew everything. Her voice held an ageless grief. "It was not enough. It's never been enough for any of them. They want to *know*, also. They want to pry, and meddle. It is their nature, because they are only men. You are

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only a man. You do not understand the gods.

"And like a man, you believe yourself greater than the gods, stronger than their spells. So you tried to disobey. You wanted to know."

Her face faded away, and now was the time to take off the helmet. Or could he wait another minute?

He waited, tense even in sleep, and the voice came again. "Very well. You shall know. Not because you desire it, but because I *permit* it. For the first thing you must know is that this is *my* dream—not yours. I make the dream, the dreams of men who have the helmets. Did you think you were the only one I have sought through the centuries? Did you believe yourself the sole favorite of the gods, the sole creator whose creations come through the dreams I grant?

"That is the secret—and some there are who have been content with it and have not sought to disobey. They have learned their lesson, guarded their helmets as a sacred secret. They created masterpieces."

Codd's mind was a kaleidoscope now, a montage of fugitive, fleeting fragments. He saw—and to his startled horror—recognized the faces and features of a dozen Titans. Great composers, famous artists, renowned writers, immortal sculptors. In an instant they embraced the redhaired essence of womankind, wore their helmets, created, lived, died. He comprehended everything, and the melange melted, merged, went back into Time for thousands of years.

How long had it been going on, and why, and who was Cleo Fane or that which called itself Cleo Fane?

"I grant you all answers," came the thought-voice. "Behold, if you dare."

Then he was on the island and he knew it for Aeae, and knew her for what she was—the eternal sorceress of all legend, the immortal, the undying, the symbol of creation and destruction known to blind Homer. Redhaired Circe, whose delight it was to ensnare the souls of men. And men were unworthy of that embrace, they sinned against the gods, and became beasts. Swine and stallions, lions and wolves; she took from them the creative power they despised and left them only the animal. They became animals.

So had Homer sung the story—and ceased. But the story did not end. It could never end, for the gods are immortal. And when Aeae sunk into the sea, Circe sought refuge. Not on earth—for what is Time or Space to an immortal?—but far, far beyond.

Now Codd was back on the green planet once more, the far green planet with the three moons. This was Circe's new island; her island in space. Here men did not visit her, so she went among men from time to time.

"Always I seek ecstasy," the voice echoed. "Always I seek the thrill which comes only in participating in the act of creation. And it is my eternal curse that I cannot create of myself. I can only transform. I must go to men, to half-beasts who possess but do not appreciate this power, in

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order to awaken them. And when they reject their power, deny me a share of their soul's surrender, I avenge myself. I transform them into the animals they deserve to be. For they reject the gift of the gods, the helmet —"

Codd comprehended, and with a thrill of recognition, comprehended that he comprehended. This dream was different; a part of him was aloof, analytical. He wasn't in her power, wasn't in the helmet's power. He had the armour of Science, the weapons of Doctor Fine. He was invulnerable. He could listen, accept or reject at will. This was a new plot, perhaps. If he liked it he'd use it when he awoke; if not, he'd throw it away. Just as now, at any time he chose, he'd rip off the helmet and leave the crazy woman with her garbled dreams.

She was a woman, all right, and insane. And she'd given him hours of free fantasy while he was under hypnosis—all her mad delusions had been impressed on his brain. That's where the plots had come from, and no wonder he'd felt depressed while he was writing them! And now, ultimately, came the final product of her suggestions; the central core of her fixation. She was a sorceress, Circe, no less. And a streamlined, modern Circe who lived on a planet of her own, far out in space. Three moons, indeed! And all men were beasts, and she was greater than men, and she lured artists to their doom —

He saw her with the animals around her, now, and they wore helmets too. And they fawned on her and licked her naked feet, and she chose a mount and bounded off across the weird landscape that was no landscape but merely a reflection of the twisted convolutions of her own disordered brain.

She was pleading with him now, and shouting at him, and threatening him. He must not try to find out about the helmet, he must not resist the dreams, he must not see Doctor Fine. If he would keep on wearing the helmet and writing, she would never seek any vengeance.

"I'll give you dreams to weave wonders," she whispered. "You shall be famous, your name will live for all time. And all I ask is that I share. That I share the ecstatic moments of creation with your soul."

Codd pitied her, then; pitied her as she must have been when she sat beside him in the darkness and poured out her madness to his sleeping mind.

"But if you disobey, you know your punishment," the voice threatened. "And you cannot escape. You cannot escape, ever. It will go on, forever and ever, as long as the three moons wheel. So choose, choose! Would you be one with the gods, or a base and craven dog, a howling cur in the wilderness of a faraway world? Yours is the power of choice—mine the power to punish or reward. So choose, choose!"

There was pity in Codd's mind, but there was also a growing revulsion. He couldn't stand the morbidity much longer. He must remove him-

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self from this source of aberration, return to sanity as a whole man. And he could do it. He heard her voice, saw the green world—and at the same time realized that he sat in his own apartment, wearing the absurd helmet. Doctor Fine had told him what to do. The Doctor was Fine, everything was fine, everything would be all right once he removed the helmet, removed the crazy notion from his head. Beast, was he? Dog, eh? He was a man, his own man.

And he could prove it. He could feel and he could act. Act as he acted now. Barnaby Codd lifted his hands to his head. He felt the helmet—it was real. And he could take it off.

She was screaming, now; screaming and laughing. Probably she had done so at the last, when she broke down completely in her delirium and cast her final "spell." In her way, the poor woman had actually been "possessed"—she thought of herself as a sorceress and so she had been.

But spells must be broken. Dreams must end.

He reached up and took off the helmet.

The screaming stopped. It stopped inside his head, stopped outside his head.

The helmet was off. He was free.

This was reality.

He was crouching now, panting, but he knew he had broken the spell. This was real. It was over, irrevocably over.

Barnaby Codd opened his eyes. Then *she* came over and patted his head, mounted his back. He lifted up his shaggy head and howled to the three moons. . . .

Editorial

(Continued from page 5)

magazines with their "unindoctrinated" editors, and have begun to discover that, though it isn't "what you've been accustomed to," it isn't bad at that.

Really, we old-timers have an edge on the newcomers. We have twenty-five years of know-how behind us. We won't have any trouble in selling our product. We can make a better product than the new mechanic who hasn't any idea of whether a wrench or a screwdriver is in order. But newcomers learn fast. They aren't afraid of making mistakes, because they wouldn't know if they were making a mistake or not in what they were proposing to do. They are going to be out there selling, and they have mighty persuasive tongues. The answer is simple, we old-timers are go-

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ing to use our tongues too!

You casual readers won't know it; but many of the magazines you read last month won't be with you in six months. You'll never notice it. You'll never know a battle has taken place; a battle for newsstand space and for your attention. You'll never know that somebody lost that battle. But you old-time fans will note each new title, and you will observe when they disappear again. You will note also, quite instantly, when an old-timer falls by the wayside. You will even feel alarm that your own personal favorite might be lost in the shuffle. You, of course, will try to save it by being preferential. You will even subscribe, to be sure you get your favorite magazine.

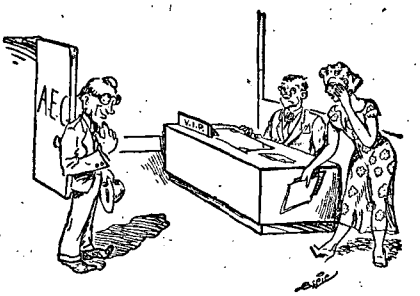
Yet, nothing you can do will alter the fact—the battle is joined, and the old-timer enjoys no better battle position than the rankest of newcomers. He'll have to oil up his firing mechanism and pump high-powered ammunition at you, indiscriminately; whether you are on his side already or not.

As one of the most experienced editors in the field, and certainly one of the editors with the longest continuous period of service, we predict that the result will be highly interesting to all of you, new and old reader alike. Because it cannot result in anything except a suddenly accelerated pace, a new excellence of quality, a dropping of outmoded things, and the creation of new things. It will be a period of rapid change, of rapid adjustment, and perhaps, of huge success on some fronts, and sad demise on others.

We've pioneered your trips to OTHER WORLDS, sometimes in battered, unsafe ships with leaky atomic piles, dangerous in the extreme. Now we're going to take you to still OTHER WORLDS in style! We're building a fine new ship with the latest in fusion engines, with speeds unheard of before this, and with destination unlimited. Every time you put up 35c for this magazine, you'll be buying a first-class ticket to adventure, entertainment and inspiration in OTHER WORLDS far beyond the imagination of yesterday, or even of today. The very fact that you are reading this means we won this month's competition. You'd be smart to remember the name OTHER WORLDS and stick with a winner!

That's a tip from Ray Palmer to all you new guys and gals who never heard of "the son of science-fiction."

—*Rap.*



"He says do you have to smash the atom, can't you just bruise it and let it go?"

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LETTERS

CLARK PUBLISHING COMPANY, 806 DEMPSTER STREET, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

Ted E. White

In several of your editorials, you've spoken of having better stories when you ran serials. Now in some cases I agree. But definitely not with Shaver. His best story was in Oct. '51, "Journey To Nowhere." Another example is his "Beyond The Barrier" each part was almost a separate story, and would have been better that way.

Incidentally your best ish was the Oct. '51 OW. Every story agreed with me 100%. However I notice OW is climbing back up, with "Somewhere A Voice" and "Field Of Battle." The latter particularly intrigued me. It wasn't really thought provoking, it didn't seem to have any great concepts, but, for some reason, I haven't enjoyed a story like this in years. Maybe one reason I liked it so much, was that it reminded me of the OZ stories. I don't know, but whatever this reason, I really loved "Field of Battle."

Hoping for a bigger and better OTHER WORLDS.

1014 N. Tuckahoe St.,
Falls Church, Va.

We've modified our serial policy. We'll only present stories as serials when there's no other way out.—Rap.

Gary Cockrell

Today I walked into a book store and looked around for something to read. I hadn't read any science fiction for several months and had a losing interest over the last few years since the popular *Shaver Mystery*. I looked around and in one section I saw several copies of science fiction pulp. I glanced through these one by one with no real interest in any until I picked up your book. I looked at the cover, the name, and then the authors and I stopped and looked again.

There was the name of the man, the author, who first introduced me to science fiction and had held my interest through the years that he wrote. There was the name, Richard S. Shaver; that meant to me another exciting story that I could *almost* want to believe. Shaver, the man who passed on through science fiction stories like *The Worm* and *Earth Slaves to Space* and even better ones. Whether they were the truth or not didn't matter; they were great stories.

Naturally I bought your book and I will continue to do so as long as his name appears among your list of authors. Shaver may or may not have told the truth during the *great mystery* but one must admit, no matter how practical, that in this strange

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world there are many mysteries that we cannot begin to comprehend.

I also read the letter of our would-be "mature" college editor who tries so very hard to write like the great critic but can say nothing but ten different repetitions of mature and immaturity. Maybe Mr. Conto should take a course on maturity himself or better yet, not take his fiction so hard.

Before I end this letter I don't want to leave you with the idea that all I like about science fiction is Richard Shaver, so keep up the good work. I have just one gripe, I don't care for serials. I also would like to have Shaver switch back to the *mystery* if possible.

3702 W. Florissant
St. Louis, Mo.

The trouble with the Mystery is that it's been told and retold. In short, it lacks its original punch, its novelty. But don't worry, Shaver will write some really good stories for us. Right now, however, his wife is very ill, and he is having his troubles. He doesn't do much writing.—Rap.

Larry G. Slapak

Calling all Okanagan and B. C. Interior science fiction fans. We're surrounded and unorganized. There are fan clubs East of us, on the coast and to the South across the line. It's time we got together. We can do it. There are hundreds of us here in the Valley judging from the piles of stf magazines prominently displayed on every magazine stand from Kamloops and Revelstoke down to Penticton. All we need to do is form a club. So every fan, no matter how young or old, what occupation or nationality or how lightly you read it, please register your name and address with me. And get any friends you know who read it to do the same. We can make this into a real "humdinger" of a club that will be fun for everyone concerned and yet put B. C.'s Okanagan Valley and surrounding territory on the stf map. I can be contacted Saturdays and Sundays at Box 83, or phone 3582, Armstrong, B. C., or Mondays thru Fridays at General Delivery, Golden, B. C. How about it?

P. O. Box 83,
Armstrong, B. C.,
Canada

Ronald Moss

I have just completed the March issue of OW, having read it from cover to cover. I was rather shocked with the pre-occupation of all concerned as to the merits of your covers. Covers do not make science fiction. If you are content to sell OW on the basis of its cover, you're in the wrong business. Even if weird or colorful cartoons do temporarily increase circulation, how will this help you discern what is good sf? Let's face facts. Science Fiction must offer much more, if it is to graduate from the junior league into its proper place as the leader of modern fiction. If your contents are good, we'll find you regardless of the cover . . . but first things first.

710 West End Ave.
New York, N. Y.

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You're absolutely right, beautiful covers do not sell magazines! How did you know? We found out the hard way. But there is something about covers that sell magazines, and you'll see us doing it in the future. But primarily, we'll try our best to have the stories the best you'll be able to get anywhere—and you BETTER find us, or miss some real treats.
—Rap.

Dorothy F. Wease

The March issue was my first introduction to *Other Worlds*. I have always liked SF for its value to me in relaxation, and will go with an author anywhere he wishes as long as I can follow him on some reasonable path. However, this issue twice offends my sense of justice, and I'll have to get it off my chest. The rest of the mag was fine.

First, in "Publicity Stunt," the author made it abundantly clear that the Venusians were intelligent and that their dancing grounds were sacred. What is the attitude of Molock, our hero? "Then by Harry! dance somewhere else!" is his answer to the inoffensive protest against his sacrilege. And then he goes on with personal insults. And wins the fight, AND Shad's esteem. The Venusians have such a highly developed culture that he gets away with it. On earth he would have been slaughtered. Mr. Williams may have made a slip in his plot.

Second, in "Lost Continents." I am not a Mormon, but I have friends who are, and tho' I am not as familiar with the details of that religion as I am my own, the last part of that first paragraph cuts like a nine-tailed whip. I can find no excuse for Mr. de Camp.

Both of these show the form of bigotry, and if we are ever to have peace in this world, (and later, peace with other worlds if there are inhabitants) we must learn tolerance and respect for the opinions of others. The pen is truly a mighty tool in influencing attitudes and events, and even in so small an incident as this the author and the editor have responsibilities to the reader, and to the future of the world.

14 North Oakes St.
San Angelo, Texas

We don't believe either Williams or de Camp meant anything personal by their treatment of their subject. Williams might have been depicting his Earthmen in all-too-true light; and de Camp's subject is lost continents, not religions. It merely happens that he quoted Mormon belief. We hope you will forgive us for our apparent intolerance. Actually we often lean very far the other way in our stories, deliberately.—Rap.

Keran O'Brien

You might call this a vote of confidence in your fine magazine. I should like herewith to register one more vote. Please drop that column, feature, or what have you, entitled *The Man from Tomorrow*. This is just one fan's request. Perhaps millions (?) more have written in prais-

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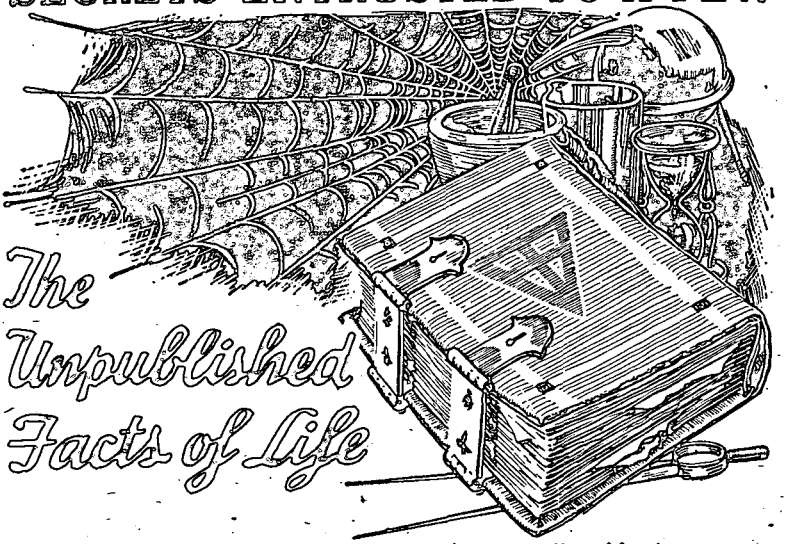
SECRETS ENTRUSTED TO A FEW



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ing the thing. If that's the case, then I'm lost. After all, it takes *at least* a few thousand fans to make a magazine, and I'm just one.

186-29 Avon Road
Jamaica 32, N. Y.

You are more than one fan, it seems! But no matter how many there are like you, there seem to be as many unlike you. Perhaps then you will wonder why we are dropping the feature? Perhaps one inkling may come from the way we hit the hurricane that flooded England, Holland and parts of France and Denmark. We predicted the worst hurricane in 500 years, right on the dot, even to timing. The prediction is still only half fulfilled. But recently we've been going to press too soon before publication and most of our predictions are short-range. So it's silly to publish them after they happen! Basically, though, we were trying an experiment, and when we find ourselves getting a reputation for being possessed of some strange power, we are getting in too deep. We just don't want such a reputation. And when so many readers dislike the column, we think we ought to discontinue it. If we have any predictions we think our readers ought to know, we'll mention them in the editorial or other appropriate place.—Rap.

Clyde Hauffe, Ph.D.

You are to be congratulated upon the appearance of Doctor Smith in your magazine. I had begun to fear I would not live long enough to see this.

One would not believe it possible to discover such a new and clever approach, leave it to Smith the Master!

Is there not something you could dangle in front of Doctor Smith as a bribe in order to obtain another "Tedric" story? At his usual rate of speed this would mean sometime during the next half decade. He must do it sooner.

The illustrations on your back covers are most admirable.

I hope to read in your magazine shortly that you have launched but the first in a long series concerning the saga of "Tedric."

North Manchester College
North Manchester, Ind.

What else!—Rap.

Bob Farnham

Wonder if you'd grant me a bit of space to comment on the coming convention at Philadelphia, Sept. 5-6-7? I understand that the hotel will be underwritten by contract — that rooms reserved will be *ready upon arrival* and best of all, the Chicon Ballet will be matched at Philcon 2. I've never seen a ballet previous to the Chicon but was instantly won over as an enthusiastic fan there.

104 Mtn. View Drive
Dalton, Ga.

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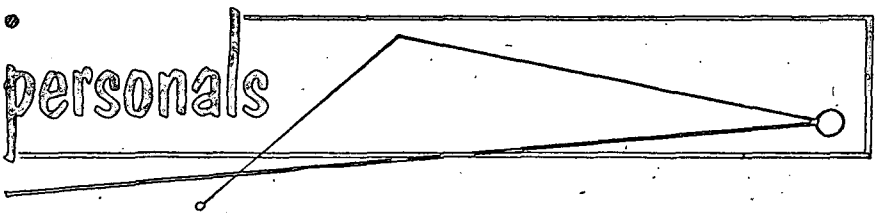

Did *Other Worlds discover us first? Read the article in Fantasias, No. 5. Also material by Wetzel, Ryan, Chappell and others. 15c/copy. David English, 63 W. 2nd St, Dunkirk, N.Y.* . . . Want any Puck Comic Weeklies from 1943 to June '51. Will trade PB editions of "The Rogue Queen," "Dragons Island," "The Illustrated Man" and "The Martian Chronicles" for all Flash Gordon comic books except No. 1, Jay Mullins, 2126 Rucker, Everett, Wash . . . *Am looking for Galaxy Novel No. 2, "The Legion of Space," will buy or trade for. Have lots of stf including OW to trade also. Mrs. Barbara Witek, 31 Montgomery St, Westfield, Mass* . . . Wanted: Pre '51 aSF; stf pen-pals about 16 yrs old; U.S. PB's, especially E. R. Burroughs; a Brooklyn stf club; stf art work. For sale: Many stf or fantasy books, mint condit, below list price. Roland Dumontet, 363 Linden Blvd, Brooklyn 3, N. Y. . . . *I have for sale over 1,000 stf mags. Send stamped, addressed envelope for list. James Brook, 11 Cranberry St, Brooklyn 2, N. Y.* . . . All people in the San Fernando Valley interested in stf and fantasy, especially in writing and putting out a zine, contact Charles Nuetzel, 16452 Moorpark St, Encino, Calif . . . *For sale: Over 100 stf mags (predominantly AS & FA), several British publications and about 35 PB's. Will listen to offers for one copy (good condit) of Weinbaum's "The New Adam." Mags run from 1948 to date. Carl H. Geist, 2323 W. Ainslie St, Chicago 25, Ill* . . . Wanted: all comic books published from 1939 thru 1943. Will pay cash or trade similar items for them. Have about 2,000 comic books ranging from 1931 thru 1946 to trade. Ronald Graham, 1903 Everett, Lafayette, Ind . . . *Want to buy the issue of aSF containing "E For Effort," but don't remember which issue that was. Can anyone help me? Roy Morser, 203 W 35th St, Norfolk, Va* . . . Test tubes for PROJECT FAN CLUB wanted. If you wish to start a fan club or your club is having trouble, contact me. Clubs which have PROJECT FAN CLUB questionnaires, please reply. If your club hasn't received a questionnaire, write to me for one. PROJECT FAN CLUB, Orville W. Mosher, 1728 Mayfair, Emporia, Kans . . . *Will trade Galaxy Novels 1 & 2 (Sinister Barrier & The Legion of Space) for practically any pre '48 aSF. Also will trade April '52 Galaxy for best offer. Lonny Lunde, 306 Elmore, Park Ridge, Ill* . . . Breaking

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up collection. Send want lists, have many copies of all stf mags. Jim Phillips, 1458 W. Wilson, Chicago 40, Ill . . . *For sale: aSF 1938 on; Unknown Worlds, Galaxy, F&SF, New Worlds, Avon Fantasy Reader and many others. Most in good condit. Fred Darvill, M.D.,* 200 15*th Ave North, Seattle 2, Wash* . . . For sale: Over 500 stf & fantasy mags, almost all types, most for 20c each, a few cost more, a few less. Send for list or send want list. Will buy or trade for OW containing Colossus I. Will sell Colossus II & III. Bill Peck, 1041 W. Agarita Ave., San Antonio 1, Tex . . . *We have a monthly fanmag of art and articles of interest to anyone who likes stf. Has air brush & silk screen covers, and talks about stf as a field. 15c for 2 copies from John L. Magnus, Jr.,* 9612 *Second Ave, Silver Spring, Md* . . . Will trade "Travelers of Space" (new), Gnome, $3.95, for "Who Goes There" by J. W. Campbell, Jr. or "Sands of Mars" by A. C. Clarke. Milton Rosenkotter, Pierce, Nebr . . . *Would like any clippings or data about Flying Saucers; anything at all, even personal experiences. Margaret Kaufman,* 1020 *S. Downing, Seaside, Ore* . . . For sale: $7.00 for a complete set of OW in very good to mint condit.; 25 issues to first person sending $7.00 to 130 Vera Street, West Hartford 7, Conn. Ronald D. Rentz . . . *Am interested in starting a Ray Bradbury fan club. Also want back issues of stf mags containing his stories. Would like to hear from fans from all over U.S., especially Muncie. No age limit. Ramon Martin Henderson,* 75 *Warwick Rd, Muncie, Ind* . . . Would like to buy back issues of OW and Madge. Want fanmags also. Cecil Purdy, 510 7th Ave W., Cullman, Ala . . . *For sale or trade: "Pebble in the Sky," "Foundation," "Fury," "Weird Tales by E. E. Poe" (1896), and "The Great War Syndicate" by Frank R. Stockton (1889). Send in your offers. William B. Ellern, Ferry Hall, W.S.C., Pullman, Wash* . . . Would like to exchange 4 mags (Nov & Oct '52 issues of SS, SFQ, OW and Space Stories) for 70c and Galaxy Novels 1 & 2. Peter Bomier, 18644 Saticoy St, Reseda, Calif . . . *Have July Sept Oct Nov & Dec '51 Galaxy, assorted issues of Madge and aSF, "The Martian Chronicles," "Tarzan of the Apes," "The Return of Tarzan," "Tarzan the Untamed," and "Moon Maid" to trade for the first* 12 *issues of OW. Would like to correspond with fans about* 15 *years old. Chuck Chermside, Darrow School, New Lebanon, N.Y.* . . . Want these NON-stf items; will pay $2.00 EACH. Breezy Stories—Aug '35, Mar Apr & July '36, May & Oct '37; College Life—1928 issue with story "The Good Die Young;" Black Book Detective—Issue in '30s with "One And A Half Murders." Will buy or give 20 stf mags for each one in trade. Walter Thomas, 10913 Dove Ave, Cleveland, Ohio . . . *Have* 32 *Unknowns and almost* 200 *aSFs, all in good condit with covers. Am interested in trading them for stamps along with parts* 1 *&* 2 *of the International Album. If there is a stf club*

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in or near Brooklyn, would like to get in touch with them. George Schwartz, 1675 Lincoln Pl, Brooklyn 33, N. Y. . . . HYPHEN; Walt Willis, 170 Upper Newtownards Rd, Belfast, Northern Ireland and Chuck Harris, 'Carolin' Lake Avenue, Rainham, Essex, England; sub price, 1 US promag for 2 issues. Contains material by A. Vincent Clarke, Willis, Ken Beale, Chuck Harris, James White, Bob Shaw & Ermengarde Fiske . . . *For sale: PB's "The Man Who Sold the Moon," "Green Hills of Earth," "Day After Tomorrow," "Mission: Interplanetary," "Beyond the Moon," "Nineteen Eighty-Four," "Dragons Island," "Revolt of the Triffids," "Rogue Queen," "An Earth Man on Venus," "Illustrated Man," "Saturday Evening Post Fantasy Stories," "The Moon Pool," "Dwellers in the Mirage," & "Atomic Age Opens" all in excellent condit., 21c each, plus 10c postage on orders of three books or less. Also have these anthologies at 31c each: "Beyond the End of Time," "Stf Galaxy," and Mentor Books "Life on Other Worlds" and "On Understanding Science." Ira S. Stoller, 158-15 96th St, Howard Beach 14, N. Y. . . .* FANTASY TIMES, twice-a-month newszine published by James V. Taurasi, 137-03 32nd Ave, Flushing 54, N. Y. 10c each, 12/$1. Reports of latest stf news from all over . . . *I have scattered copies of Astoundings from* 1934-51. *Would like to trade for copies of aSF which I don't have. Wm. J. Doherty, Jr., 23 Florence St, Cambridge 39, Mass.*

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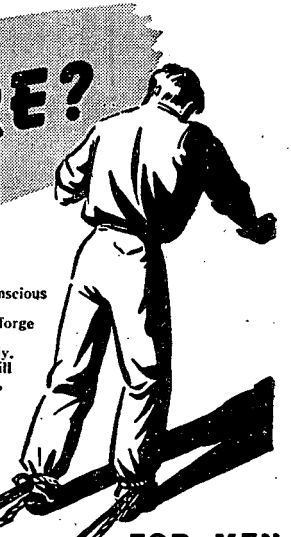

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